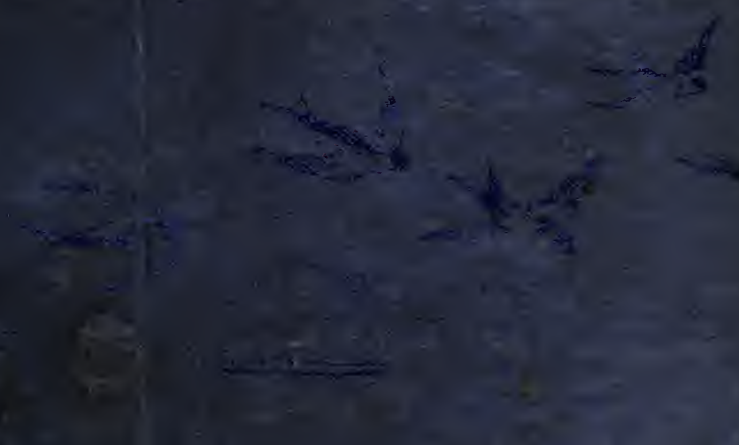


A BIRD of PASSAGE

BY

B. M. CROKER





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A

BIRD OF PASSAGE.

BY

B. M. CROKER,

AUTHOR OF "PROPER PRIDE," "PRETTY MISS NEVILLE,"
"SOME ONE ELSE."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

"Such wind as scatters young men thro' the world
To seek their fortunes further than at home,
Where small experience grows."

THE TEMPEST.

SECOND EDITION.

London :

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON,

CROWN BUILDINGS, 188, FLEET STREET.

1887.

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR.
SOME ONE ELSE.

NEW AND CHEAPER EDITION.

SMALL POST 870, CLOTH EXTRA, PRICE 6s.



LONDON: SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON,
CROWN BUILDINGS, 188, FLEET STREET

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A BIRD OF PASSAGE.



CHAPTER I.

MALVERN HOUSE.

“Come what, come may—

Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.”

Macbeth.

A FEW days after her aunt had thus frankly unfolded her plans, Helen was out shopping,—officiating as companion and carrier to her cousin Clara—and again encountered Mr. Quentin. He was strolling down Piccadilly, looking like a drawing from a tailor’s fashion plate, and evidently in a superbly contented frame of mind. On this occasion, (being alone,) he condescended to accost Miss Denis, entirely ignoring their previous meeting in the park.

“Delighted to see you,”—shaking her vigorously by the hand. “And how long have you been in town?”

“Nearly two months.”

“I need not ask you how you are?”—Yes, to himself, she was getting back her looks.—“And where are you staying?”

“With my aunt—in Upper Cream Street.”

“Upper Cream Street!” he echoed, with increased respect in his tone, and a look of faint surprise in his dreamy blue eyes. “Then I shall certainly make a point of coming to see you.—What is your number?”

“Thank you, very much; but I am leaving on Monday—(this was Saturday)—and,” looking him bravely in the face, she added, “I am going to a situation. I am going out as a governess.”

Mr. Quentin was somewhat disconcerted by this rather blunt announcement, but he did not lose his presence of mind, and said in his most airy manner,—

“Oh, really!—well, then, on another occasion I may hope to be more fortunate.—

During the holidays, perhaps?" glancing interrogatively at Clara Platt, who returned his gaze with a stare of dull phlegmatic hauteur, implying an utter repudiation of her cousin, and all her concerns.

Turning once more to Helen, he said,—

"Heard any news from Port Blair?"

"No, not lately."

"Awful hole, wasn't it? I wonder we did not all hang ourselves, or go mad!"

"I liked it very much, I must confess," she replied, rather shyly.

"Oh!" shrugging his shoulders, "every one to their taste, of course. No doubt it seemed an earthly Paradise to a young lady just out from school; and you had it all your own way, you know. By-the-bye, I wonder what has become of Lisle? Some one said he was in California,—I suppose *you* have not heard?"

There was a half-ironic, half-bantering look in his eyes, and the same amiable impulse that impelled him to pull the legs off flies when he was a pretty little boy, was actuating him now.

"I," she stammered, considerably taken aback by this unexpected question, and meeting his glance with a faint flush,—“Oh, no.”

“Well, I see that I am detaining you now,”—with another glance at Clara—“I hope we shall meet again before long; good-bye,” and with a smile and sweep of his hat, he walked away in a highly effective manner. He was scarcely out of ear-shot, ere Miss Platt burst forth, as if no longer able to restrain herself,—

“Helen, how could you! How *could* you tell him all our private affairs. I never was so disgusted in my life. What was the good of informing him that you were going to be a governess, and, as it were, thrusting the news down his throat?”

“What was the harm? For the future, of course, he will drop my acquaintance. Though there is nothing degrading in the post, I am quite certain that he, as he would call it, ‘draws the line at governesses,’ and, indeed—from what I have heard you say—so do you.”

“Don’t be impertinent to me, if you please,

Helen. I think you totally forget yourself sometimes, and all you owe to mother and to us."

"You need not be afraid, that I shall *ever* allow such a heavy obligation to escape my memory," returned Helen, with complete equanimity.

Was she likely to forget these months of making, and mending, parcel-carrying, and general slavery to her cousins Clara and Carrie? Her companion was conscious that there was a hidden sting in this speech, but contented herself with gobbling some incoherent remark, lost in her throat, about "ingratitude" and "insolence." After this little skirmish the two ladies did not exchange another syllable, and they reached their own hall door in dead silence.

"Odious, detestable girl!" cried Clara to her sister, as she flung off her hat, and tore off her gloves in their mutual bower. "What do you think? When we were coming home we met that Mr. Quentin, and he stopped and talked to her for ever so long, and she never *introduced* me!"

“Well, I’m sure! However, it was no loss, you know he has not sixpence.”

“No; but listen. He asked her where she was staying, and said he was coming to call, and she actually told him, with the utmost composure, that he need not mind, as she was going to a situation on Monday as governess.—I was crimson! I’m sure she did it out of pure spite, just to make me feel uncomfortable.”

“Not a doubt of it,” acquiesced her sister. “How excessively annoying! That man knows the Sharpes, and Talbots, and Jenkins’, and the whole thing will come out now; after all the trouble we have taken to keep it quiet, and telling every one, she was going to friends in the suburbs.”

“Yes,” chimed in Clara, wrathfully. “What possesses people to persecute us with questions about our cousin—our *pretty* cousin, forsooth! Such a sweet-looking, interesting girl. Pah! I’m perfectly sick of her name, and the prying and pushing of one’s acquaintance, is really shameless. Old Mrs. Parsons has returned to the charge again and again.

She has no more tact or delicacy than a cook. Do we ever worry her, about *her* poor relations, and 'how they have been *left*,' as she calls it?"

"No, thank goodness," replied Carrie, emphatically; now addressing herself to her own plain reflection in the looking-glass. "There is no coarse, vulgar curiosity about *us*, I am happy to say. *We* are ladies." And with this sustaining conviction in their bosoms, these two sweet sisters, descended affectionately arm-in-arm to luncheon.

On Monday morning, Mrs. Platt herself carried her niece to her future abode in the family brougham. Their destination was a square, detached, red brick mansion, remarkable for long rows of windows with brown wire blinds, an outward air of primness bordering on severity, and a brass plate on the gate the size of a tea-tray, which bore the following address: "Malvern House—Mrs. Kane's establishment for young ladies."

As Helen and her aunt ascended the spotless steps, and rang the dazzling bell, the sound of many pianos, all discoursing

different tunes, scales, songs, and exercises, was absolutely deafening.

Mrs. Kane received her new governess very graciously, and when Mrs. Platt had taken her departure, she personally introduced her to the scene of her future labours without any unnecessary delay; sweeping down upon the classes with Miss Denis in her train, and launching her into school-life with a neat little speech, which had done worthy service on similar occasions.

The schoolroom was a long apartment, lighted by five windows, and lined with narrow black desks, at which were seated about fifty girls; and although silence was the rule, a little low buzz, a kind of intangible humming of the human voice, was distinctly audible to the new arrival, as she stood in the midst of what, to a timid young woman, would have seemed a kind of social lion's den.

Mrs. Kane had twenty boarders and thirty day scholars; and between the two parties an internecine war was quietly but fiercely carried on from term to term, and from year

to year, and handed down from one generation to another, as faithfully as the feud between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. It was rumoured in both factions that Bogey's successor ("Bogey" was their flattering soubriquet for their late governess) "had come in a carriage and pair; Annie Jones had seen it out of the music-room window;" and the young ladies were inclined to treat her with more tolerance, than if she had merely arrived in an ordinary "growler." Of course, all the hundred eyes were instantly unwinkingly fixed on the new-comer as she walked up the room in the wake of her employer. They beheld a young lady in deep mourning, slight and fair, and—yes—positively pretty! quite as good-looking, and not much older than Rosaline Gay, the belle of the school. They noticed that she did not appear the least bit shy or nervous (twelve years in a similar establishment stood to Helen now); she was not a whit abashed by the gaze of all these tall, staring girls, who were subsequently surprised to discover, that she was perfectly conversant

with school rules and routine; and more than this, that despite her youth, and fair, sad face, she could be both determined and firm.

A large staff of masters, who taught music, singing, drawing, dancing, and literature, came and went all day long at Malvern House; but the only resident teachers besides Helen, were a Mrs. Lane, a widow, who looked after the housekeeping, poured out tea, and taught needlework, and Mademoiselle Clémence Torchon, a Parisienne, with whom Helen found herself thrown into the closest companionship. They occupied the same room, sat side by side at table, and walked together daily behind the long line of chattering boarders. Clémence was a young woman of about eight-and-twenty, who had come to England more with a view of learning that language, than of imparting her own tongue. She was square, and stout, and sallow; was better conversant with French poetry, than verbs, maintained her personal dignity by a stolid impassive demeanour; boasted a noble appetite, and was unblush-

ingly selfish, and surprisingly mean. She honoured her new companion with a large share of her confidence, and during their daily airings, poured into her unwilling ears, the praises of a certain adorable "Jules," and even compelled her, when half asleep, at night, to sit up and listen to his letters! letters written on many sheets of pink paper, and crammed with vaguely sentimental stilted sentences, signifying nothing tangible, nothing matrimonial, but nevertheless affording the keenest pleasure to Mademoiselle Torchon. The young English teacher could not afford to quarrel with so close an associate, and feigned a respectable amount of civility and interest; but how often did she wish "*ce cher Jules*," not to speak of his effusions,—at the bottom of the deep blue sea!

Once or twice mademoiselle had hinted, that she was good-naturedly prepared to receive a return of confidences in kind; and had even gone so far as to say, "Have *you* ever had a lover?"

Her listener's thoughts turned promptly to

a certain moonlight night, the scent of orange flowers, the shade of palms, and all the appropriate accessories of a love tale, not forgetting Gilbert Lisle's eloquent dark eyes, and low whispered, broken vows. Nevertheless, Miss Denis cleverly parried this embarrassing question, and mademoiselle, having but little interest to spare from her own affairs, dismissed the subject with an encouraging assurance, "that, perhaps, some day or other she might also have a Jules," as she was, though rather *triste* and frightfully thin, "*pas mal pour une Anglaise!*"

Mrs. Kane withdrew into private life, the moment that school hours were over. When the bell rang at four o'clock for the departure of the day scholars, she disappeared, and left the burthen of surveillance to Miss Denis and mademoiselle—the latter, like the unselfish darling that she was, shuffled off her share of the load upon her companion's shoulders, and generally ascended to her own room, where she lay upon her bed, devouring chocolate creams, and French novels for the remainder of the day.

Helen's duties commenced at seven o'clock in the morning, (at which hour she was obliged to be in the school-room, to keep order,) and they were not at an end till she had turned off the gas in the dormitories at half-past nine at night; after that, her time was her own,—and she was then at liberty, to listen to Clémence's maunderings, and Jule's last letter.

Mrs. Kane soon discovered that her new governess was a clever girl, with stability and force of character beyond her years; moreover, that she had unusual influence with the pupils, and was popular in the school room; so she engaged her permanently at a salary of forty pounds a year—and washing. This offer was accepted with alacrity, for Mrs. Platt seemed to have wholly forgotten her niece, and the comfortable home that she had promised to secure for her, and Helen gladly settled herself down, as a permanent member of the Malvern House staff. Weeks rolled into months, months into quarters, and nothing came to break the dull monotony of her existence,

beyond occasional letters from Mrs. Home and Mrs. Durand, and a visit to Smithson Villa; she actually hailed the arrival of the yellow brougham, with unalloyed delight, and had not shrunk from sharing it,—not merely with her hostess, and the dogs, and the weekly groceries, but with a leg of New Zealand mutton, that was to furnish forth the family dinner. She liked Lady Grubb, despite her little eccentricities. She even enjoyed (so low had she fallen!) the perusal of Mrs. Creery's latest effusions from Port Blair. In Lady Grubb's back drawing-room, with one of these in her hand, she seemed to hold in her grasp the last feeble link that bound her to her former happy life among those distant tropical seas.

She did her utmost to live altogether in the present, to invest all her thoughts and energies in her daily tasks, and to shut her eyes to the future—and still more difficult feat—to close them to the past. Month after month, she toiled on with busy, unabated zeal; (Mrs. Kane warmly congratulating herself on the possession of such a *rara avis*, and

giving her (mentally) a considerable increase of salary). She rose early, and went to rest late, her mind was at its fullest tension all day long; she was working at too high pressure, the strain was beyond her physical powers, and the consequence was, she broke down. Gradually she lost sleep, and appetite, became pale, and thin, and haggard.

“My dear,” said Mrs. Kane with some concern, “we must get you away for a change. The doctor says you ought to go home, and have a good long rest.”

“But I have no home, Mrs. Kane.—I am an orphan,” she returned, gravely. “I’m not nearly as ill as I seem, in fact I’m not ill at all! There is nothing the matter with me, I’m as strong as a horse. You must not mind my *looks*!”

“Would you not like to go to your aunt’s for a week or two? I see she has returned from abroad.”

“No, thank you, I would ten times rather go to the poor-house,” she answered, unguardedly. “Excuse me, perhaps I’m a little hasty, but I’m proud, and I, if I must

come to beggary, prefer public charity, to the private benevolence of—relations.”

But in spite of Helen’s repudiation of the hospitality of her kindred, Mrs. Kane wrote a polite little note to 15, Upper Cream Street, that brought Mrs. Platt to Malvern House the very next day,—in a peevish, not to say injured, frame of mind.

“Well, Helen,” she exclaimed, as her niece entered the drawing-room, “so I hear you are in the doctor’s hands;”—making a peck at her as she spoke. “Let me see! there’s not much the matter with you, I fancy.—For goodness’ sake, don’t get the idea into your head that you are *delicate*!”

“You may be sure that that is the last thing I shall do, Aunt Julia.”

“I must talk to Mrs. Kane, and tell her you should take extract of malt. She will have to fatten you up.—Yes, certainly, you want fattening;”—speaking exactly as if she were alluding to a young Christmas turkey. “And so, I hear, you are giving satisfaction, and that you are a very good musician, and linguist! I am glad your poor father’s

extravagant education, has not been entirely thrown away! Mrs. Kane speaks very highly of you. But, dear me, child, why did you not take equal advantage of other opportunities; why did you not make hay in the Andamans?"

"Hay! aunt. There was none to make, beyond a very small crop in the General's compound."

"You know very well what *I* mean, you provoking girl! I'm certain you had offers of marriage. Now had you not?"

Helen made no disclaimer to this, beyond a slight shrug of her shoulders.

"Come, come! Silence gives consent. How many?"

"What does it signify, aunt. All girls out there—"

"That is no answer," persisted Mrs. Platt, tapping her foot on the floor.

"Well, I do not think it is fair to tell."

"But you could have married?"

"Yes, I suppose I may admit as much as that."

"And instead of being comfortably settled

in your own house, here you are, slaving away all your best years, and best looks in a school. I'm sure you are sorry enough *now*, that you did not say 'yes!'"

"On the contrary, I have never regretted saying 'no,'—and never will."

"Perhaps there was some one who did *not* come forward?" inquired the elder lady, with a rather sour smile.

"Perhaps there was, aunt!" she rejoined, with a laugh, that entirely baffled Mrs. Platt, who, after surveying her for some seconds in searching silence, exclaimed,—

"Well, you are a queer girl! I can't make you out! I certainly could not imagine *you* caring a straw for any man! Your face entirely belies your real disposition; it gives people the idea that you are capable of deep feelings—perhaps of what is called '*une grand passion*'—whereas, in reality, you are cold and as unresponsive as the typical iceberg. However, considering your present circumstances, and youth, and good looks,—perhaps it is just as well!"

Having delivered herself of this opinion,

as though it were an oracle, Mrs. Platt sank into a tone of easy confidential discourse, and imparted to her listener, that her recent campaign on the continent, had not been entirely barren of results. A certain elderly widower, had been "greatly attracted" by Clara, and had paid her considerable attention, and that it was not unlikely, that they would have a wedding before very long. And after a good deal more in this strain, and yet more, on the subject of the frightful expenses she had incurred abroad, and the paralyzing prices of some of the French hotels, Mrs. Platt, with a final recommendation of "extract of malt," went her way, and drove home alone, in her comfortable, plush-lined brougham.

Helen continued to struggle on from day to day, and conscientiously fulfilled her allotted duties. She indignantly refused to accept the *rôle* of invalid; she told herself that, could she but tide over the next six weeks, she would contrive a trip to some cheap sea-side resort, and there recruit her shattered health—her health that was her only capital!

What was to become of her if she broke down? she would have no resource but charity! She shivered at the very thought. Each day her round of tasks became more of an effort; she felt as if some dreadful, unknown illness was lying in wait, and dogging her steps hour after hour. Sometimes the room swam round, and figures and words in exercise-books seemed to mix and run about before her aching eyes. But so far, by sheer force of will, she fought off the enemy, and fiercely refused to surrender.

When ten days had elapsed, Mrs. Platt was once more in Mrs. Kane's drawing-room, the bearer of a letter in her pocket, that she flattered herself would remove her poor relation entirely out of her own orbit.

"My dear, I declare you look really ill—very ill!" she exclaimed, as her niece entered. "Don't come near me,"—moving suddenly across the room, and making a gesture of repudiation with both hands,—“keep away, there's a good girl! I'm certain you are sickening for something,—diphtheria or smallpox! Small-pox is raging. You must

see a doctor immediately, and take precautions. If it is anything, you will have to be sent to hospital at *once!* ”

“ You need not be the least alarmed, Aunt Julia ; there is nothing the matter with me. My head aches, and I’m tired sometimes ; that is all, I assure you.”

“ Oh, well,”—rather relieved—“ I’m sure I *hope* so, otherwise it would be most awkward ! I understand now, that you really require a change, and it is principally about that, I have come over to see you. I have had a letter I wish to show you,”—sinking into an easy chair, and commencing to fumble in her pocket. “ Yes, here it is,”—handing it to her niece, who unfolded it, and ran her eyes over the following effusion :—

“ DEAREST MOTHER,—Carrie and I cannot possibly go home this week, there is so much coming off ; and *Mr. Jones is here!* Please send down our black lace dresses, our new opera cloaks, and some flowers from that man in the Bayswater Road. We shall be rather short of money, so you might enclose some—say, a five-pound note—in an envelope

in my dress pocket. So sorry you are having all this worry about Helen. What a tiresome creature she is! Of course it is quite out of the question, that we should take her in; be *sure* you impress that very firmly on her mind, mother dear. Is there not a convalescent home for broken-down governesses? Some charitable institution that she could go to?—”

“Charitable institution!” echoed Helen, aloud.

“Oh, dear me! I believe I’ve given you the wrong letter,” exclaimed Mrs. Platt, in great confusion. “Here! this must be your uncle’s,”—extending her hand as she spoke. “I’m getting so blind, and this room is so dark, I really can’t see what I’m doing,” she added, in a rather apologetic tone, her eyes sinking before her niece’s,—for she saw in them that she had read what Carrie had written; as for Helen, her heart beat unusually fast, her nerves were on edge, her wrath was kindled.

“Quite out of the question that we should take her in!” She had never dreamt of

being lodged again under her aunt's roof, but somehow, seeing the fact so plainly stated in black and white, stung her to revolt.

What had her aunt and cousins done for her, that she should be sent hither or thither at their bidding? She had toiled for them, as an upper servant, a lady help, in return for food and lodging, and she was now wholly independent, and earning her own living by incessant hard work. These thoughts flew through her mind as she opened letter No. 2, which was written in a small cramped hand on a large sheet of paper, and ran as follows :—

“Crowmore,

“Terryscreen, May 8th.

“DEAR MADAM,—I am this day in receipt of your communication, informing me that my late wife's niece, Helen Denis, is in England, an orphan, and entirely dependent on her friends.”—“Dependent on her friends!” re-read Helen, quivering with indignation and self-restraint.—“I shall be glad to give her a home under my roof, and if you will favour me with her address I shall correspond with

her personally, and make all needful arrangements for her journey to this place.

“ I am, Madam,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ MALACHI SHERIDAN.”

“ A very kind letter,” said his niece, gratefully.

“ Yes, poor crazy creature,” acquiesced Mrs. Platt, “ I suppose he *has* lucid intervals,”—then, after a pause, she added—“ Of course you will go, Helen ? ”

“ I am not sure ; I must think it over.”

“ Think it over ! what nonsense. What more do you want ? At any rate, Helen, bear in mind, that *I* have done all I can.”

“ Yes, Aunt Julia ; pray do not trouble yourself any more about me ; I release you of all responsibility on my behalf, indeed, in future, you may as well forget my existence ! ”

She had risen as she spoke, and leant her elbow on the chimney-piece, and her head on her hand. She looked unusually tall, and unexpectedly dignified. For a moment Mrs. Platt felt almost in awe of her penniless niece,

but she soon recovered her ordinary mental attitude, and said, rather sharply,—

“Don’t talk nonsense! I see your nerves and temper are completely unstrung! I hope you will be all the better for your trip to Ireland, but I’m *afraid* you will find Mr. Sheridan’s girls, a pair of uncouth, ill-bred savages, and, of course, the place is quite in the wilds, and—”

“So much the better, aunt; I like the wilds, as you call them, and you know I’m accustomed to savages.”

“Then I’m sure if *you* are satisfied,—I am,” said Mrs. Platt, huffily. “And now I really must be going, for we have some people coming to dinner,”—and with a polite message for Mrs. Kane, and a request that Helen “would write if anything turned up,” a vague sentence, meaning perhaps a good situation, perhaps an offer of marriage,—Mrs. Platt embraced her niece, and took her departure.

Helen remained shivering over the drawing-room fire, re-reading her uncle’s letter, and pondering on her future plans. After all,

disappointing as had been her experience of cousins, she might yet draw a prize in the lottery of fate, and she determined to brave these Irish Sheridans. She had thirty pounds in her desk, quite a small fortune, and if the worst came to the worst, she could always beat a retreat. With this prudent reservation in her mind, and a burning impatience to escape *anywhere*, from her present surroundings, she sat down that very hour, and wrote a grateful acceptance of her uncle's invitation, and announced her intention of starting for Crowmore, within a week.

CHAPTER II.

"YOU REMEMBER MISS DENIS?"

"I say to thee, though free from care,
A lonely lot, an aimless life,
The crowning comfort is not there—
Son, take a wife."

Jean Ingelow.

SCENE: a splendidly furnished dining-room in the most fashionable square in London; season, end of July; hour, nine p.m.; *dramatis personæ*, a father and son; the former, an old gentleman with a red face, beaky nose, and bristling white hair, is holding a glass of venerable port between his goggle eye and the light, and admonishing his companion, a sun-burnt young man, who is leaning back in his chair and carelessly rolling a cigarette between his fingers. A young man so dark, and tanned, that his visage would not look out of place beneath a

Spanish sombrero ; nevertheless, we have no difficulty in recognizing our former friend, Gilbert Lisle.

“ It’s positively indecent for a man of your position to go roaming the world, like some ne’er-do-well, or family black sheep. FitzCurzon told me he met you on the stairs of some hotel in San Francisco, in a flannel shirt, butcher boots, hat, and a coat that would have been dear at fourpence ! He declared, that you looked for all the world like a digger.”

“ Curzon—is—a—puppy, who trots round the globe, because he says it’s ‘ the thing to do,’ ” (imitating a drawl), “ and never is seen without kid gloves, and if asked to dine on bear steaks in the Rockies, would arrive in evening dress and white tie,—or perish in the attempt ; not that he ever ventures off the beaten track of ocean steamers and express trains ; he could not live without his dressing-case, and a hard day’s ride would kill him. He was in the finest country in the world for sport, and he never fired a cartridge ! ” It was evident from the speaker’s face, that this latter enormity crowned all.

“ Well, you shot enough for *six* ! I should think you have killed every animal, from a mosquito to an elephant ; this house is a cross between a menagerie and a museum. You have been away two years this time, Gil. 'Pon my word, you are as bad as the prodigal son.” Here he swallowed the port at a gulp.

“ I admit that I have been to a far country, but you can scarcely accuse me of wasting my substance in riotous living,” remonstrated his offspring.

“ I accuse you of wasting your time, sir ! which in a man in your position is worse. Why can you not content yourself at home, as I do, instead of roaming about like a play actor, or the agent for some patent medicine ! Where's this you were last ? a cattle ranche in Texas,—before that, California,—before that, Japan, dining on boa-constrictors, and puppy dogs ; before that,—the deuce only knows ; you are as fond of walking up and down the earth, and going to and fro—as—as—the devil in the Psalms, or where was it ? ”

“ My dear father,” replied Gilbert, with the utmost good-humour, “ you have com-

pared me to a black sheep, a digger,—and I suppose, because it happens to be Sunday evening,—to the prodigal son; and finally, the devil! None of your illustrations fit me, and the last I repudiate altogether; *his* wanderings, if I remember rightly, were in search of mischief. Mine were merely in quest of amusement.”

“Amusement and mischief are generally the same thing,” grunted Lord Lingard. “Why, the deuce,—you are over thirty, and getting as grey as a badger.—Why can’t you marry and settle?”

“Some people marry and never settle, others marry, and are settled with a vengeance,” rejoined his son, now proceeding to light his cigarette.

“Bah! you are talking nonsense, sir, and you know it; a man in your position must marry—heir to me, heir to your uncle, heir to yourself.”

“Heir to myself,” muttered Gilbert, “well, I shall let myself off cheap. I must marry, must I? *Je n’en vois pas la nécessité. Après moi le déluge.*”

"Oh, hang your French lingo!" growled his father. "If I had not wanted you to marry, I suppose you'd have brought me home a daughter-in-law years ago—some barmaid, no doubt."

"Barmaids may be very agreeable young women; but somehow, I don't think they are just in my line, sir."

"Line, sir, line! I'll tell you what *is* in your line! confounded obstinacy. You had the same strong will when you were a little chap in white frocks,—no higher than the poker. Once you took a thing into your head, nothing would move you."

"In that respect I believe I take after you," returned his son, with the deepest respect. "A strong determination to have your own way, helps a man to shove through life—so I have understood you to say."

"Had me there, neatly, Gilbert! Yes, you score one. Well—well—but seriously,—I want to have a little rational talk with you. There is that fine place of yours in Berkshire, shut up all the year round—think—"

"Don't say, of my *position* again, sir, I

implore you," interrupted his son, with a mock tragic gesture.

"Well, your stake in the country—think of your tenants."

"I have remembered them to the tune of a reduction of thirty per cent.—What more do they want?"

"They would like you to marry some nice-looking girl, and go down and live among them."

"If I did, and kept up a large establishment, took the hounds, and kept tribes of servants, and had a wife who dressed in hundred-guinea gowns, and went in for private theatricals, balls, races,—and probably betting,—I should not be able to make such a pleasant little abatement in the rent! How would that be?"

"You would never marry a minx like that, I should hope! Listen to me, Gilbert," now waxing pathetic, "I am getting to be an old man, and you are all I have belonging to me. I am lost here alone in this great big mansion. Marry, and make your home with me; my bark is worse than my bite, as you know,

I would like to see a woman about the house again—they are cheerful, and brighten up a place, especially if they are young and pretty. Just look at the two of us sitting on here over our coffee till nearly eleven o'clock, simply because the big drawing-room above is empty.—I am not nearly as keen about the club as I used to be, and these attacks of gout play the very devil with me."

And here, to his son's blank amazement, he suddenly dropped into poetry, and quavered out,—

"Oh woman ! in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please ;
When pain and sickness wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou."

"You speak in the plural, sir," rejoined Gilbert gravely. "You say, you like to see women about the house, that they are cheerful, they brighten up a place. Do you suppose—granting that I am a follower of Mormon—that six would be sufficient?"

"I am not in the humour for jokes ! I'm serious, Gilbert, whatever you may be. I want to see a pretty young face in the

carriage, and opera box, and the family diamonds on a pretty neck and arms—they have not been worn for years—the very sight of them would make any girl jump at you,” he concluded in a cajoling voice.

“Then, for heaven’s sake, don’t display them.”

“Gilbert, you are enough to drive me mad. I begin to think—’pon my word, I begin to suspect—that you have a reason for all this fencing,” glancing at him suspiciously beneath his frost-white eye-brows — “you are married already, sir; some low-born adventuress, some disreputable—”

“I am *not*,” interrupted his son with a gesture of impatience.

“Then you are in love with a married woman!”

“You seem to have a very exalted idea of my character, sir, but again you are mistaken.”

“Ha! humph!” tossing off a beaker of port; “Then it just comes to this, you don’t think any woman good enough to be the wife of Mr. Lisle! Now honestly, Gilbert, have you ever seen a girl you would have married?”

Dead silence succeeded this question.

"Come, Gilbert," pursued the old gentleman remorselessly.

"Well, yes—such a person has existed," at length admitted his victim most reluctantly.

"And where is she? Why did you not marry her? Where did you meet her?"

"I met her in the Andamans."

"The Andamans! Those cannibal islands! This is another of your confounded jokes!"—now looking alarmingly angry.—"I know as well as you do, that there are only savages there. Do you take me for a fool, sir?"

"There was a large European community at Port Blair. As to taking you for a fool, it would be the last thing to occur to me—on the contrary, the young lady took *me* for one."

"Then she never made a greater mistake in her life,—never. And why did it not come off?"

"She preferred another fellow,—that was all."

"*Preferred!* Humph—good matches must

have been growing on the trees out there. Well, well, well," looking fixedly at his son, "there's as good fish in the sea as ever were caught—why not fall back on Katie?"

"It has not come to that *yet*, sir—and I would sooner,—if it was all the same to you, fall back on a loaded revolver."

"She has the mischief's own temper, I allow—but what a property! However, you need not look for money—a pretty, lively English girl, that wears her own hair and complexion, and that can sing a song or two, and get out of a carriage like a gentlewoman—that's the style! Eh, Gilbert?"

"I suppose so, sir," rejoined his son gloomily; "but as the Irishman said, 'You must give me a long day,—a long day, your honour.'"

And the old savage replied,—“I remember it perfectly—‘I’ll give you till to-morrow, the twenty-first of June, the longest day in the year!’ And your shrift shall be a short one, my boy. What are you going to do with yourself to-morrow?”

“ Do you mean, that you would marry me off within the next twelve hours ? ”

“ No, you young stupid.”

“ Oh—well—I want to look in at the Academy, and a couple of clubs, and in the evening I’m going to dine with the Durands senior, and do a theatre afterwards with the Durands junior.”

“ Oh !—Mary and her husband—Mary is a sensible woman. I want to talk to her. Ask her to dine—say Thursday ? Mary has her head screwed on the right way. I shall consult her about you, Master Gilbert. I’ll see what she advises about you. She shall help me to put the noose round your neck.”

“ The *noose*, indeed,” repeated his son in a tone of melancholy sarcasm.

“ Yes, yes, I’ll settle it all with Mary.” So saying, the old gentleman went chuckling from the room in a high state of jubilation.

The next afternoon Gilbert Lisle formed one of a crowd who were collected before a certain popular picture at the Royal Academy ; but so far his view had been entirely obscured

by the broad back of a gentleman in front of him ; it vaguely occurred to him that there was something rather familiar in the shape of those broad, selfish-looking shoulders ! when their owner suddenly turned round and he found himself face to face with James Quentin.

“By jove, old fellow !” exclaimed the latter, shaking his hand vigorously, “this is a pleasant surprise ; and so you have returned from your travels—where do you hail from last ?”

“Only New York ; I arrived two days ago, and feel as if I had been away for ten years, I’m so out of everything, and behind the times—a second Rip Van Winkle.”

“Then I suppose you have not heard *my* little bit of news ?”

“No—o—but I fancy I can guess it, it’s not a very difficult riddle—you are married !”

“Right you are ! a second Daniel ! Come away and speak to Mrs. Q. ; she will be delighted to see you.”

Gilbert had not bargained for this, he would much rather never meet Helen Denis

again ; however, there was no resisting Apollo's summons, and in another moment he was standing before a velvet settee, and ere he was aware of it, his companion was saying “ Jane, my love, let me present an old friend—Mr. Lisle, Mrs. Quentin.”

He glanced down, and saw a magnificently-attired, massive-looking dame, over whose head fully forty summers had flown ; she was smiling up at him most graciously, and holding out a well-gloved hand—this lady was indisputably Mrs. Quentin,—but where was Helen Denis ?

Her new acquaintance made a gallant struggle to master his amazement, and to utter a few bald commonplace remarks about the heat, and the pictures ; and presently suffered himself to be borne onward by the crowd ; but Jim Quentin was not going to lose sight of him thus. He had married a wife considerably beneath him in birth, and it behoved him to keep a fast hold of his well-born friends, and a secure footing on the social ladder.

Lisle was a popular man ; he had discovered

this fact on his return to England, and had made considerable capital out of his name in various ways. It had proved to be an open sesame to a rather exclusive circle, who cordially welcomed Apollo, when they heard that he and Gilbert Lisle were "like brothers," and had lived under the same roof for months. Lisle had been useful at Port Blair—and he would be useful in London.

"Well, were you surprised to find that there was a Mrs. Quentin?" he asked, as he came up with his quarry in a comparatively empty room, chiefly devoted to the display of etchings on large stands and easels.

"No, of course not—but," looking him steadily in the face, "she is not the lady I expected to see."

"What!" then all of a sudden he remembered Helen—Helen, who had been completely swept out of his mind by a twelvemonth of busy intrigues, and such exciting pursuits as fortune-hunting, tuft-hunting, and place-hunting. "Oh! to be sure, you were thinking of Miss Denis, but that did not come off, you see," he added, with careless effrontery.

“ She was all very well—*pour passer le temps*—in an ungodly hole like the Andamans, but, by George ! England is quite another affair.”

“ Is it—and why ? ” inquired his listener, rather grimly.

“ Oh ! my dear fellow, she has not a rap—she was literally penniless—when her father died,—she was destitute.”

“ But you always understood that she had no fortune.”

“ Yes, but when I came to look at it, I saw that it would never do. I had next to nothing ; she had nothing at all ; one cannot live on love, and I don’t think I was ever really serious. I did you a good turn though, *you* were rather inclined to make a fool of yourself in that quarter,” administering a playful poke in the ribs, and grinning significantly.

But the grin on his face faded somewhat suddenly, as he encountered a look in his companion’s eyes, that made him feel curiously uncomfortable.

“ Where is she now ? ” inquired Lisle, speaking in a low, repressed sort of tone.

“ ’Pon my honour, I can’t tell you ! I be-

lieve she has gone out as governess, best thing she could do, you know; better than marrying a poor devil like me," he added, apologetically. "She was a nice enough little girl, and she had not half a bad time of it at the Andamans. I daresay she'll pick up some fellow at home. Look here, old chappie," button-holeing him as he spoke, "this is my card and address; now, what day will you come and dine? Got a tip-top cook,—not that you ever *were* particular,—my wife has pots of money, and we give rather swagger entertainments. Whatever day will suit you, will suit me; you have only to say the word."

"I have only to say the word, have I!" cried Gilbert, suddenly blazing into passion, "then I say that you are a scoundrel, Mr. Quentin.—I say that you have behaved like one to that girl, that's what *I* say."

Apollo recoiled precipitately. He did not like the angry light in his old friend's face, nor the manner in which he grasped his cane.

"You jilted her, on your own showing, in the most deliberate, cold-blooded manner.

Jilted her because you were tired of a passing fancy, and she was left, as you say, penniless and destitute.—She may thank her stars for a lucky escape! Better she should beg her bread, than be the wife of a cur like you! There’s your card,” tearing it into pieces and scattering it on the floor. “In my opinion, you should be kicked out of decent society, and turned out of every respectable club in London. I beg that, for the future, you will be good enough to give *me* a wide berth,” and with a nod of unspeakable contempt he turned and walked away, leaving his foe absolutely speechless, with rage and amazement.

Underneath these mixed feelings, lay a smouldering conviction that Lisle, for all his customary *nonchalance*, could be as bitter and unsparing an enemy, as he had been a generous and useful friend. Pleasant, stately houses would close—nay, slam their doors on him, at a hint from Lisle, and if the story got about the clubs, and was looked at from Lisle’s point of view,—it would be the very deuce! In his exaltation he had somewhat forgotten the *rôle* he formerly played with

his fellow inmate,—and we know that to a liar, a good memory is indispensable.—He had spoken rashly and foolishly with his lips, and had been thus summarily condemned out of his own mouth! Alas! alas! he already saw his circle of well-beloved, titled friends narrowing to vanishing point, as he now recalled a veiled threat uttered by the very man who had just denounced him! On the whole, Mr. Quentin felt that his little comedy with Miss Denis would prove an expensive performance, and he returned to his wealthy partner, feeling very much like a beaten hound.

* * * * *

That evening, as Gilbert Lisle drove up to the door of Mr. Durand's mansion, he said to himself, "Here I come to the very house of all others, where I am most likely to ^{hear} ~~here~~ the sequel to that rascal's story. Mrs. Durand is safe to know all about Helen Denis,—and if she is the woman I take her to be, she won't be long before I know as much as she does herself! I shall say nothing.—I shall not ask a single question about the young lady; not, indeed, that it personally concerns me whether she

is on the parish or not. Still, I should like to hear what has become of her.”

He made these resolutions as he entered, and passed upstairs, and presented himself in the drawing-room.

Strange to say, Mrs. Charles Durand had arrived at a precisely similar determination with regard to him. Hitherto they had only exchanged a few hasty words, had no opportunity of raking up “old days,” but to-night it would be different; “At dinner he is sure to make some allusion to Port Blair, and her name will come on the *tapis*, and I can easily judge by his looks, if there was anything in my suspicions—and very strong suspicions they were! However, I won’t be the first to break the ice; as far as Helen is concerned—I shall be dumb.”

Thus Mrs. Durand to her own reflection in the mirror, as she attired herself for the evening.

Here were two people about to meet, each resolved to be silent, and each determined to hear the other’s disclosures on an intensely interesting subject. As is usual in such

cases, the lady yielded first; her opponent was habitually reserved, and it came as second nature to him, to wait and to hold his peace. He had one false alarm during dinner, when his former playmate, addressing him across the table, said, with her brightest air,—

“I saw a particular friend of *yours* to-day; who do you think it was?”

“I have so many particular friends,” he replied, “that’s rather a large order.”

“Well, a *lady* friend.”

“A lady friend! They are not much in my way.”

“A lady you knew in the Andamans,” looking at him keenly.

He cast a quick, questioning glance at her, but remained otherwise dumb, and she, smiling at her own little *ruse*, said,—

“In short, our well-beloved Mrs. Creery! She was driving in the park, in a dreadful yellow affair, like an omnibus cut down, along with another remarkable old person. She was delighted to see me, and hailed me as if I had been a long-lost child!”

Mrs. Durand smiled to herself again.—She

was thinking of the battle royal she had fought with Mrs. Creery over the reputation of the very gentleman who was now her *vis-à-vis*.

"She asked particularly for you, and sent you a message—I'm not sure that it was not her *love*—and told me to be sure and tell you, that Monday is her day."

"I really don't see any connection between Mrs. Creery's Mondays and myself," coolly rejoined that lady's former *bête-noir*. And, with a few general remarks about Port Blair, the monsoon, the sharks, and the shells, conversation drifted back, to less out-of-the-way regions.

The younger members of the party set out after dinner for the Savoy, to see Gilbert and Sullivan's latest production. They consisted of Captain and Mrs. Durand, two young lady cousins, a guardsman, and Mr. Lisle. Mrs. Durand and the latter occupied the back seat in the box, and discoursed of the piece, mutual friends, and mutual aversions, with a scrupulous avoidance of the one topic nearest their hearts.

At last, the lady could stand it no longer; and, during the interval after the first act,

she turned to her companion, and said rather sharply,—“ You remember Miss Denis ? ”

“ Miss Denis—oh, yes ! of course I do ! ”

“ Those are her cousins in the box next the stage—those girls in pink.”

“ Is she living with them ? ”

“ Oh dear no ! She stayed a month or two on her first arrival, and, by all accounts, they led her the life of a modern Cinderella, and afterwards turned her off to earn her bread as a governess.”

“ Indeed ! ” he ejaculated, with such stoical indifference, that Mrs. Durand felt that she could have shaken him. But, after a moment's silence, he added, “ I always thought she had married Quentin—until to-day.”

“ Oh, nonsense ! You are not really serious ! Of course you are aware, that your friend, Apollo, has espoused a widow with quantities of money in the oil trade.”

“ Pray do not call him *my* friend ; I am not at all anxious to claim that honour,” he rejoined stiffly.

“ Then you have been quarrelling, I sup-

pose. I wonder if it was about the usual thing—one of my sex?"

"It was.—I may say as much to *you*. In fact it was about Miss Denis—he treated her shamefully."

"What makes you think so?"—opening her eyes very wide, and shutting up her fan.

"Because he was engaged to her at Port Blair.—He told me so. And when she was left penniless, he jilted her for this rich widow."

"He told you that he was engaged to Helen? Oh," drawing a long breath, "never!"

"Yes, and showed me a ring she had given him."

"Again I say, never, never, *never*!"

"My dear Mrs. Durand, there is no good in saying, never, never, never, like that. The ring he exhibited, was one that I had given Miss Denis myself!"

"Oh, sets the wind in that quarter!" mentally exclaimed the matron; "I thought as much." But aloud she replied, "Was it a curious old ring, without any stones, that

was stolen from her the night of the ball ? ”

“ It was the ring you describe. But it was not stolen, for she gave it to Quentin when he went to the Nicobars as a ‘ *gage d’amour*. ’ I expected that he would have married her as soon as possible after her father’s death ; indeed, I understood that he was returning from Camorta with that intention. But you see I have been so completely out of the world, that I heard nothing further till I met Quentin and his wife at the Academy to-day ; and he calmly informed me that he had never seriously contemplated marrying Miss Denis, and that the Andamans and London are quite a different pair of shoes ! Pray, do you call that honourable conduct ? ”

“ You are quite, quite wrong ! ” cried Mrs. Durand, excitedly. “ Now you have said your say, it is my turn to speak ; and speak I will,” she added, with a gleam of determination in her eye.

“ Oh, certainly ! ” returned her listener, with rather dry politeness.

"Helen was, and is, a particular friend of mine, and I happen to *know* that she could not endure Apollo Quentin! She did not even think him good-looking! and he bored her to death.—He stuck to her like burr, and she could not shake him off. She would ten times rather have talked to Captain Rodney, or Mr. Green,—or even to *you*! She was no more engaged to him than I was. She never gave him that ring."—Here her listener stirred, and made a gesture of impatient protestation.—"That ring was *stolen*, and sold for twenty rupees," concluded Mrs. Durand, in her most forcible manner.

"Stolen—sold!" he echoed, turning towards her so suddenly that it made her start. "Is this true?"

"*True?*" she repeated indignantly.

"I do not mean to doubt you for one second; but you may have been deceived."

"At any rate, I had the benefit of my *own* eyes and ears.—They do not often mislead me."

"Then how—"

"If you will only have patience you shall

hear all. Helen stayed with me for the last week at Port Blair; and the night before she sailed, when I went into her room I discovered Fatima grovelling on the ground at her feet, and holding the hem of her dress, and whining,—‘A—ma! A—ma!’ in true native fashion. ‘I very bad woman, Missy,’ she was saying; ‘and I very sorry *now*.—I stealing jewels—why for I sent here? And now I done take, Missy’s ring and sell for twenty rupees.’ ”

“Sold it! To whom?” interrupted Mr. Lisle, his dark face flushing to his temples.

“*That* she refused to divulge. All we could prevail on her to confess was, that she had taken it the night of the ball, and that she did not think it was of any value; but seeing how much trouble Missy was in,—and Missy going away to England, she was plenty sorry.”

“Stolen the night of the ball—sold for twenty rupees, and Quentin showed it to me the next morning!” exclaimed Lisle.

After this summing up, he and Mrs. Durand looked at each other for about twenty seconds, in dead silence.

“Where is Miss Denis now?” he inquired in a kind of husky whisper.

“I wish I could tell you! I’m a miserable correspondent; I never answered her last letter, written from a school at Kensington. I would rather walk two miles than write two pages. It’s very sad, and gets me into great disgrace. But though I do not write, I don’t *forget* people. As soon as I arrived at home I went off to this school to see Helen, and to make my peace.”

“Yes?”

“The house was all shut up, blinds down in every window, the cook in sole charge, every one else away for the holidays. The cook only showed half her face through the door, and was not at all inclined to be communicative; but I gave her something to help her memory, and then she recollected, that six weeks before the school broke up, the English governess had gone away sick, but she understood that she had not left for good.—School opens again on the 1st of September,” added Mrs. Durand significantly.

“Meanwhile, where is she?”

“That is more than I can say.”

“Perhaps her cousins would tell you,” glancing over at the Miss Platts.

“Not they—if they did know, I doubt if they would inform you, as they are even more disagreeable than they look,—and that is saying much. However, I shall get a friend to sound them about their cousin. I believe they treated her like a servant, and made her carry parcels, run messages, mend their clothes, and button their boots!”

“How did you hear this? from Miss Denis?”

“She never named them. I’m afraid to tell you, lest you should think me a second Mrs. Creery.”

“No fear—there could be but *one* Mrs. Creery—she is matchless.”

“Well, my sister’s maid, Plunkett—now really this is downright gossip—came to her from the Platts, and one day we were talking about fine heads of hair, and she described the beautiful hair of a poor young lady in her last place,—Mrs. Platt’s niece, Miss Denis;

and so it all came out, for of course I pricked up my ears when I heard her name."

During this conversation the curtain had risen on the second act, and the entire audience was convulsed with delight at one of Grossmith's songs, and yet these two talked on, and never once cast their eyes to the stage. Indeed, Mrs. Durand had almost turned her back on the actors, and was wholly engrossed in an interesting little drama in private life. The other occupants of the box were in ecstasies with the performers, and Captain Durand, after gasping and wiping his eyes, turned to his wife impatiently, and said,—

"Well, really, Mary, you might just as well have stayed at home, and talked there; you have done nothing but gossip.—I thought you were wild to see this piece. If you are so bored yourself, you might at least give Lisle a chance of enjoying it!"

"Charley says I must not go on chattering any longer, distracting your attention from the play. We can finish our conversation another time."—So saying, she took up her

opera-glass, and addressed herself seriously to the performance.

As for Gilbert Lisle, he leant back in his chair, and also fixed his eyes on the stage, but he saw absolutely nothing. If he had been asked to describe a character, a scene, or a song, he could not have done so to save his life. His mind was in a state of extraordinary confusion; he was dazed, overwhelmed, at the situation in which he found himself.

So he had been the dupe, and tool, of Quentin from first to last! It seemed incredible, that Quentin, to gain a momentary empty triumph, had stooped to theft, in order to bolster up a lie, and maintain his reputation as a lady-killer. Then as for Miss Denis,—if she had not been engaged to Quentin, and had never parted with the ring, what must she think of him? He held his breath at this poignant reflection. If any one had jilted her,—if any one had behaved vilely, if any one was a dishonoured traitor, it was he—Gilbert Lisle—sitting there staring stupidly before him, surrounded by ignorant, and confiding friends, who be-

lieved him to be a gentleman, and a man of honour! As he cast his eyes over a mental picture, and saw himself, as he must appear to Helen, he was consumed by a fever of shame, that seemed to devour him. To live under the imputation of such conduct, was torture of the most exquisite description to a man of his temperament;—who had such a delicate sense of personal honour, and such chivalrous reverence for other people’s veracity, that he had fallen an easy prey to an unscrupulous brazen-tongued adventurer, like James Quentin. Fury against Quentin, restored faith in his lost *fiancée*, were all secondary to one scorching thought, that seemed to burn his very brain—the thought of the disgrace that lay upon his hitherto unblemished name. To have sworn to return to a girl,—to have vowed to make her his wife,—and to have miserably deserted her, without message, or excuse,—left her to bear the buffets of adversity as best she could,—to earn her own living, or to eat the bread of charity, was maddening—maddening. He must get out of the theatre into the open air; but first he leant over Mrs. Durand’s chair, and spoke

to her in a few broken and imperfect sentences.

“What you have told me to-night, has a significance that you cannot guess” (oh, could she not?). “It alters—it may alter—the whole course of my life. Mrs. Durand—Mary! you were always my friend, be my friend now. When you get her address, and you will get it—you *must* get it,—to-night, to-morrow—you will give it to me in the same hour—promise.”

“Why should I promise?” she asked playfully, delighted to see the immovable Gilbert for once a prey to some powerful emotion.

He was pale—his very lips were trembling, big beads of perspiration stood upon his temples.

“Why should I tell you especially?”—she repeated, but looking in his face, she saw that he was too terribly in earnest to be in the mood for light badinage. Looking in his face, she read the answer.

“I *see*,—yes, you may depend on me.”

Reassured by this pledge, he grasped her hand in silence, and rose to leave the box. But ere he departed, she turned her head

over her shoulder, and murmured behind her fan, "I believe it is all going to come right at last.—And, Gilbert," lowering her voice to a whisper, "I always suspected that it was *you*."

"What's the matter? What has become of Lisle?" inquired her husband, looking sharply round as he heard the door close. "Where is he? Why has he gone away?"

"He was not in the mood for light comedy, my dear. He has just heard something of far more powerful interest than *The Silver Churn*," nodding her head impressively. "You remember a bet you made about him and Helen Denis, one evening in the Andamans?"

"I don't remember any bet—but I know you had some impossible idea in your head."

"Then *I* recollect the wager—distinctly—a new bonnet. And my idea may seem impossible, but it is true. It was *not* that odious puppy, Apollo Quentin, who was in love with Helen, it was,—as I repeatedly told you,—Gilbert Lisle. So to-morrow, my good Charles, I shall go to Louise's and invest—at your expense—in the smartest bonnet in London."

CHAPTER III.

FINNIGAN'S MARE.

"I do not set my life at a pin's fee."—*Hamlet*.

HELEN'S preparations for departure were rapidly accomplished; she had no voluminous wardrobe to pack, no circle of farewell visits to pay. Moreover, she was possessed by a feverish desire to escape, as far as possible, from maddening pianos, piles of uncorrected exercise-books, and the summons of the inexorable school-bell. She set out for Crowmore on the appointed date, with a delightful sense of recovered freedom, but—as far as her unknown relatives were concerned—strictly moderate expectations. Precisely a week after she had received her uncle's invitation, behold her rumbling across dear, dirty, Dublin, in a dilapidated four-wheeler, drawn by a lame horse—her tender

heart would not suffer her to expostulate with the driver on their snail's pace, and as the result of her benevolence, she missed her train by five minutes, and had the satisfaction of spending a long morning, in contemplating the advertisements in the Broadstone terminus. At length, after four hours' leisurely travelling, she was deposited at a shed labelled "Bansha," the nearest station to Crowmore. Bag in hand, she stepped down on the platform and looked about her; she was apparently the only passenger for that part of the world, and there was no one to be seen, except a few countrymen lounging round the entrance—the invariable policeman, and one porter. She gazed about anxiously, as the train steamed slowly away, and discovered that she was the cynosure of every eye,—save the porter's, and he was engrossed in spelling out the address on her trunk.

"You'll be for the Castle, Miss?" he remarked at last, straightening his back as he spoke.

"No, for Crowmore, Mr. Sheridan's," she

replied, walking out through the station-house over into the station entrance, in the vague hopes of finding some conveyance awaiting her, and her baggage—but all that met her anxious eyes, was a little knot of countrymen, who were gossiping round a rough rider, on a heavy-looking brown colt.

“Shure, Mr. Sheridan’s and the Castle is all wan, miss,” said the porter, who accompanied her, carrying her bag. “The young ladies wor here this morning, in a machine from Terryscreen, they expected you on the twelve,—and when you were not on that, they made sure you were coming to-morrow—they’ll be here thin.”

This was but cold comfort to Helen. “How far is it to Crowmore?” she asked.

“Well, it’s a matter of in or about six mile.”

“And how am I to get there?”

“Faix, I don’t rightly know! unless Larry Flood gives you a lift on the mail; ayther that, or you could get an asses’ car up the street,” indicating a double row of thatched cottages in the distance.

“And when do you think Larry Flood will be here?” inquired the young stranger—ignoring his other humiliating suggestion.

“Troth, an’ it would be hard to say!—it entirely depends on the humour he’s in—he calls for the letters,” pointing to a bag in the doorway. “Just as he takes the notion, sometimes he is here at five o’clock, and be-times I’ve known him call at one in the morning!”

A sudden interruption made him turn his head, and he added, with a triumphant slap of his corduroy leg, “Begorra, you are in luck, Miss,—for here he is now!”

As he spoke, a red outside car, drawn by a wild-looking chestnut, wearing a white canvas collar, and little or no harness, came tearing into the station, amidst a cloud of dust. The driver was a wiry little man, with twinkling eyes, that looked as if they were never closed, a protruding under-lip, and an extravagantly wide mouth. He was dressed in a good suit of dark tweed, and wore a green tie, and a white caubeen.

“What’s this ye have with ye, the day,

Larry?" demanded one of the idlers, as he narrowly examined the animal between the shafts. "May I never," he added, recoiling a step backwards, and speaking in an awe-struck tone; "if it isn't Finnigan's mare!"

"The divil a less!" rejoined Larry, complacently. "Finnigan could get no good of her, and the old brown was nearly bet up. I'll go bail she'll travel for *me*," he added, getting off the car as he spoke, and giving the collar a hitch.

But this proud boast was received in ominous silence, and all eyes were now riveted on Mr. Flood's recent purchase—a white-legged, malicious-looking, thoroughbred—that was seemingly not unknown to fame.

"Well," said a man in a blue tail coat, after a significantly long pause; "it's not that she won't travel for ye, there's no fear of *that*, I hope you may get some good of her, for she's a great mare entirely—but she takes a power of humouring."

"Shure she knocked Finnigan's new spring car to smithereens ere last week," put in the

rider of the coarse-looking brown colt, "not a bit of it was together, but the wheels, and left Finnigan himself for dead on the road. Humouring, how are ye?" he concluded, with a kind of scornful snort.

"You got her chape, I'll engage, Larry, me darlin'," remarked another of the idlers.

"Faix, and I paid enough for her," returned her owner stoutly. "It isent every wan that would sit over her! she does be a bit unaisy in herself betimes" (a delicate allusion to her well-known habits of kicking and bolting). "Howdsomever, she's a grand goer, and I bought her designedly on purpose for the post.—'Tis *she* can knock fire out of the road."

"Oh! them sprigs of shellelagh can all do that," acquiesced a bystander, who had hitherto observed a benevolent neutrality; "but they does be dangerous bastes."

"What's that you have there, Tom?" inquired Larry, looking at the rough rider.

"Oh! a terrible fine colt of Mr. Murphy's—I'm just handling him a bit, before the next cub-hunting."

“He is a great plan of a horse,” said the man in the blue coat, speaking with an air of authority, and his hands tucked under his long swallow-tails.

“Look at the shoulder on him !” exclaimed a third connoisseur.

All this was by no means agreeable to Mr. Flood, considering the tepid praise bestowed on his own purchase.

“What do you think of her, Larry ?” inquired the rider. “Come now, give us your opinion ?” he added in a bantering tone.

“Well, I think,” said Larry, gladly seizing this opportunity to pay off Tom, the horse-breaker, and eyeing the animal with an air of solemn scrutiny. “Well, now, I’ll just tell ye exactly what I think—I think he looks *lonely*.”

“Arrah, will ye spake English !” cried his rider, indignantly ; “shure, lonely has no meaning at all—nor no sinse.”

“I just mane what I say—he has a lonely look,” and with a perceptible pause, and a wink to the audience, he added, “for the want of a plough behind him !”

At this joke there was a roar of laughter from all, save Tom, the horse-trainer, who glared at Larry in a ferocious manner that was really fearful to witness, but Larry, nothing daunted, turned to the porter with an off-hand air, and said,—

“Anything for me, Pat?”

“Nothing at all—barrin’ the mails—and this young lady! I’m after telling her, you’ll lave her at the gate. She’s going to the castle, only—” Approaching nearer, and whispering behind his hand, with a significant glance at Finnigan’s mare.

“Oh, the sorra a fear!” rejoined Larry, loudly, and then addressing Helen, he said,—

“Up ye git, miss, and I’ll rowl ye there as safe as if ye were in a sate in church.”

It was all very well to say “Up ye git,” but, in the first place, there was no step to the car, and in the second, it is by no means an easy feat, to climb on any vehicle when in motion, and Larry’s rampant investment kept giving sudden bounds and playful little prancings, that showed her impatience to be once more on the road. However, by

dint of being held forcibly down by the united strength of two men, she consented to give the lady passenger an opportunity of scrambling up on the jarvey, and Larry having produced a horse-sheet (with a strong bouquet of the stable), wrapped it carefully about her knees—then mounting on the other side of the vehicle himself, he laid hold of the reins, and with a screech to his friends to “give her her head,”—they were off, as if starting for a flat race—accompanied by a shout of “Mind yourself, miss,” from the friendly porter, and “Safe home, Larry,” from the little knot of spectators, who were gathered round the station door.

At first, all the “So-hoing” and “Easy now, my girl,” might just as well have been addressed to the hard flint road, along which they were rattling. The “girl” kept up what is known as “a strong canter” for the best part of a mile, and Helen’s whole energies were devoted to clinging on with both hands, as the light post-car swung from side to side with alarming velocity.

“You need not be the laste taste unaisy,

she's only a bit fresh in herself," said Larry, soothingly, "and after a while when she settles down, you'll be delighted with the way she takes hold of the road."

A very stiff hill moderated the pace, and Finnigan's mare, subsided perforce into a slashing trot, and "took hold of the road" as if she were in a passion with it, and would like to hammer it to pieces with her hoofs. And now at last Helen ventured to release one hand, and look about her; she was struck with the bright, rich verdure of the surrounding scenery — Ireland was well named "The Emerald Isle," she said to herself, as her eyes travelled over a wide expanse of grass, thick hedges powdered with hawthorn, and neighbouring green hills, seemingly patched with golden gorse. Very few houses were visible, no sign of towns or smoky chimneys were to be descried — this was the real unadulterated country, and she drew a long breath of satisfaction, due to a sense of refreshment, and relief. Now and then they passed a big empty place, with shuttered windows; now a prosperous-

looking farm, with ricks and slated out-buildings, and now a roadside mud cabin. Finnigan's mare, dashing madly through poultry, pigs, goats, and such sleeping creatures as might be imprudently taking forty winks, in the middle of the little-used highway—which highway, with its overhanging ash-trees, tangled hedges, and wide grass borders, was the prettiest and greenest that Larry's passenger had ever beheld—this much she imparted to him, and he being ripe for conversation, immediately launched forth with the following extraordinary announcement:—

“Och, but if ye had seen these roads before they were made! 'tis then ye *might* be talkin'! There was no ways of getting about in ould times—no play for a free-going one like this,” nodding exultingly at the chestnut, who was flying down hill at a pace that made the post-car literally bound off the ground. “She's going eligant now—these chestnuts does mostly be a bit “hot”—but where would ye see a better traveller on all the walls of the worruld?”

“She is not quite trained, is she?”

“Well, not to say all *out*,” he admitted reluctantly; “she’s had the harness on her about a dozen times, and she never did no harm—beyond the day she ran away at Dan Clancy’s funeral, and broke up a couple of cars; and ’twas Finnigan himself was in fault—he’d had a drop. Shure, she’s going now like a ladies’ pony! May be you’d like to take the reins in your hands yourself, miss, and just *feel* her mouth?”

But Helen, casting her eyes over the long, raking animal in front of her, and observing her starting eyes, quivering ears, and tightly tucked-in tail, had no difficulty in resisting Larry’s alluring offer. Little did she know the vast honour she was rejecting. Larry, (like most Irishmen,) was not insensible to a pretty face, and rating this young lady’s courage beyond its deserts—owing to her equanimity during their recent gallop, and the tenacity of her hold upon the jaunting car—paid her the greatest compliment in his power, when he offered her the office of Jehu. Helen having politely, but firmly, declined the reins,

breathed an inward wish that the animal who had behaved so mischievously at Dan Clancy's funeral, would continue her present sober frame of mind until she was deposited at the gates of Crowmore. And now Larry began to play the cicerone, and commenced to point out various objects of interest, with the end of his whip, and the zest of a native.

"That's Nancy's Cover," he said, indicating a patch of gorse. "There does be a brace of foxes in it every season—that ditch beyond,—running along in company with the cover, as far as your eye will carry you,—goes by the name of "Gilbert's Gripe," because it was there—a nephew of Mr. Redmond's I think he was, in the horse soldiers—pounded every other mother's son in the field! Be jabbers, I never saw such a lep! and the harse—the very same breed of this mare here—he never laid an iron to it! That's Mr. Redmond's place, in the trees beyond, and beyant again is the castle. What relation did ye say ye wor to Mr. Shiridan?"

Helen was not aware that she had mentioned Mr. Sheridan at all, but she replied,—

“ His niece—his wife’s niece.”

“ You never saw him, I’ll go bail ? ”

“ No, never ; but why do you think so ? ”

“ Troth, and ’tis easy known, if you *had*, you would not be wanting to see him twice.”

Larry grinned from ear to ear, but Helen’s heart sank like lead, at this depressing piece of intelligence.

“ He is greatly failed since he buried the mistress,” continued Mr. Flood. “ He is a poor innocent creature now, and harmless ; he does be always inventing weathercocks, and kites, and such-like trash, when he ought to be looking after the place. Miss Dido does that ; oh, she’s a clever wan. Just a raal trate of a young lady ! ”

“ Do you mean that she manages the farm ? ”

“ Troth, and who else ? ’tisen’t the poor simple ould gentleman—the Lord spare him what senses he *has*—for he would make a very ugly madman ! Miss Dido minds the books, and the business, and the garden, and the money—not that there’s much of that to trouble her—and Darby Chute, a man that lives at the “ Cross,” buys and sells a few

little bastes for her, and sees to the turf-cutting and the grazing. The shootin's all let—a power of the land too. What the ould man does with the rent of it, bates all.”

“I suppose Darby Chute is a faithful old family servant?” said Helen, her mind recurring to the ancient retainers of fiction.

“Bedad, he is *ould* enough! but I would not answer for more than that; he is Chute by name, and 'cute by nature. *I'm* thinking! Mr. Sheridan has a warm side to him, and laves him great freedom.—The ould steward that died a few years back, was a desperate loss. Now *he* was a really valuable man; 'tis since then they have Darby, who was only a ploughman before. I'm sorry for the two young ladies; they go about among the people, so humble and so nice, as if they had not a shilling in the world—and more betoken they haven't many.—I wish to the Lord they were married! but they are out of the way of providence here,—there's no quality at all, this side. They do say, young Barry Sheridan does be entirely taken up with Miss Kate; but he's the only wan that's in it,

and no great shakes ayther; and in *my* opinion—”

“Is there no one living over there?” interrupted his listener, averse to such disclosures, and pointing to a long line of woods on the horizon.

“Shure, didn’t I tell you that it was all Mr. Redmond’s, of Ballyredmond? The old people does be there, and an English young lady betimes, she is mighty plain about the head. I never heard them put a name on her.” Then in quite an altered tone, he added excitedly, “By the powers of Moll Kelly, but I see the Corelish post-car, there ahead of us in the straight bit of road. Do you notice him, miss? the weenchie little speck. I do mostly race him to the Cross of Cara Chapel, where our roads part, and I’m thinking I’ve the legs of him this time! Altho’ he has the old piebald, and a big start; we will just slip down by the short cut through the bog, and nail him neatly at the corner!”

At first this announcement was Greek to his fare,—but she began to comprehend what he meant, as he turned sharply into a bye-

way, or boreen, and started his only *too* willing steed, at a brisk canter !

“ There’s Cara Chapel,” he said, indicating a slated building on the edge of a vast expanse of bog. “ You’ll see how illigantly we will disappoint him ; he is on the upper road, and that puts a good mile on him. It will be worth your while to watch his face, as we give him the go-by, and finds we have bested him after all!!! Do you get the smell of them hawthorns, miss ? they are coming out beautiful,” (as they careered along a narrow, grassy, boreen, between a forest of may-bushes, white with flower.) “ And now here’s the bog,” he added, proudly, as the boreen suddenly turned into a cart track, running like a causeway through a wide extent of peat and heath, that lay far beneath on either side, without the smallest fence, or protection. It was an exceedingly awkward, dangerous-looking place, and they were entirely at the mercy of Finnigan’s mare, who rattled joyously along, pricking her dainty ears to and fro, as if she was on the *qui vive* for the smallest excuse to shy, and bolt,—and the pre-

text was not wanting ! An idle jackass, in the bog below, suddenly lifted up his voice, and brayed a bray so startlingly near, and so piercingly shrill, that even Helen was appalled ; how much more the sensitive creature between the shafts, who stopped for one second, thrust her head well down between her fore-legs, wrenched the reins out of Larry's hands,—and ran away !

“ Begorra, we are in for it now,” he shouted. “ Hould on by your eyelashes, miss ; we will just slip off quietly at the first corner. Kape yourself calm ! Bad scram to you for a red-haired divil” (to the mare). “ Bad luck to them for rotten ould reins,” reins now represented by two strips of leather, trailing in the dust.

“ Oh ! murder, we are done !” he cried, as he beheld a heavily-laden turf-cart, drawn up right across the track.

“ Oh, holy Mary ! she'll put us in the bog.”

The owner of the turf-cart, was toiling up the bank with a final creel on his back, when he beheld the runaways racing down upon his devoted horse and kish. His loud execrations, were idle as the little evening breeze

that was playing with the tops of the rushes and the gorse,—Finnigan's mare was already into them! With a loud crash, and a sound of splintering shafts, a thousand fms of turf were sent flying in every direction. Helen was shot off the car and landed neatly and safely in a heap of bog mould that luckily received her at the side of the road;—Larry also made a swift involuntary descent, but in a twinkling had sprung to his feet, and seized his horse's head, calling out to his companion, as she picked herself up,—

“ 'Tis yourself that is the fine souple young lady, and not a hair the worse; nayther is the mare, barrin' a couple of small cuts, and one of the shafts is broke,—faix, it *might* have been sarious!”

“ Arrah, what sort of a driver are ye, at all?” shouted the owner of the turf-cart, breathless with rage, and haste. “ Oh, 'tis Larry Flood,—an' I might have known!”

“ And what call have you to be taking up the whole road?” retorted Larry loudly.—“ The divil sweep you, and your old turfkish that was nearly being the death of us!”

“ Ah ! and sure wasen't she running away as hard as she could lay leg to groun' ? ”

“ Well, and if she *was* ; didn't she see you below in the bog, and take you for a scarecrow ? and small blame. Here, don't be botherin' me, Tim Moony, but lend a hand to rig up the machine, and the tackling.”

Thanks to the turf-cutter's generous assistance, in a very short time, Mr. Larry Flood was enabled to come forward and announce to his fare, who had dusted her dress from bog-mould and taken a seat on a piece of wood, that “ he was ready, if *she* was.”

The young lady accordingly rose, and followed him, and gravely inspected the turn out.—The car was all down on one side still,—the result of a spring broken in the late collision,—but the reins had been knotted together,—and the shaft was tied up with a piece of twine.

“ It will hould all right,” said Larry, following her eyes. “ Any way, it will carry *your* distance, I'll go bail.”

“ Thank you ; but I am not going to try the experiment. I'm stiff enough as it is ; and one fall in the day, is ample for the present.”

"Fall! What fall? Sure ye only jumped off the car. Diden't I see you with me own two eyes? And 'tis yourself that has them nice and tight under you! and in elegant proportion!—meaning your ankles, Miss,—and no offence."

"All the same, I shall walk, fall or no fall," returned his late passenger, with a scarlet face.

"You are a good mile off it yet," expostulated Larry. "How will you get there?"

"On foot."

"And your bag; is that going on foot, as well?"

"Perhaps you would leave it as you pass?"

"Indeed, and I will! Of course you are only English, and what could ye *expect*; but at the first go off, you were as stout as any lady that ever sat on a car."

"Stout?" she echoed in supreme amazement. But perhaps in Ireland things had different names.

"I mane stout-hearted! and now, after all, you are going to walk. To *walk*!" he reiterated, with indescribable scorn.

“ Yes, and you will take the bag—*it* has no neck to break.”

“ To be sure, I’ll lave it with pleasure; but—” and here he paused rather significantly.

“ Of course I’ll pay you,” she said, fumbling for her purse. “ How much ? ”

“ Oh, well, sure,—nothing at all ! I would not be charging the likes of you. ’Twas an honour to drive such a beautiful young lady.”

“ How much ? ” she repeated, with a little stamp of her foot.

“ Well, thin, miss, since you are so *detarmined*, we won’t quarrel over two half-crowns ; and if you would like me to drink your health in the *best* that was going,” rubbing his mouth expressively with the back of his hand, “ we will say six shillings.”

Helen immediately placed six shillings in his greedy palm.

“ Thank you kindly, my lady, and may you live seven years longer than was intended for you. It’s not *my* fault, that I did not lave you at your journey’s end, as Tim Moony will allow.—There’s the mare,” waving his hand

towards the wicked-looking chestnut ; “there’s the machine,” indicating the battered car and twine-tied shaft ; “and they are both altogether and entirely at your service.”

Helen shook her head resolutely, and made no other reply.

“Well, then, miss, as I see I can’t *tempt* ye, I suppose I may as well be going ; and I’ll lave the bag inside the lodge. Keep on straight after the cross, till you come to a pair of big gates,—and there you are.”

Having given these directions, and ascended to the driving-seat,—so as to have what he called “a better purchase on the baste,” Larry muttered a parting benediction, lifted his caubeen, and drove furiously away.

CHAPTER IV.

"CROWMORE CASTLE."

"We have seen better days."

LARRY and Finnigan's mare, were not long in dwindling into a little speck in the distance; and when they had completely vanished, Helen set out to walk to Cara Cross, the goal of the post-car races. Once there, she had no difficulty in discovering the road to the left; and a quarter of a mile brought two massive pillars into view, each surmounted by a battered, wingless griffin. But there were no gates—unless a stone wall and a gate were synonymous terms in Ireland. Three feet of solid masonry completely barred the former entrance, and said "no admittance" in the plainest language. Helen leant her elbows on the coping-stones, and gazed in amazement at the scene before her.

She saw a grassy track, that had once been an avenue, lined by a dense thicket of straggling, neglected shrubs. To her right and left stood the roofless shells of two gate lodges. On the step of one of them, she descried her bag; and only for this undeniable clue, she would certainly have walked on, and sought the entrance to Crowmore elsewhere. Being (as Larry had not failed to remark) an active, "souple" young lady, she lost no time in getting over the wall and rejoining her property. As she picked it up, she cast a somewhat timid glance into the interior of the ruin, and beheld a most dismal, melancholy-looking kitchen, with the remains of ashes on the hearth; the roof and rugged rafters, partly open to the skies; hideous green stains disfiguring the walls, and the floor carpeted with nettles and dock-leaves. A bat came flickering out of an inner chamber, which warned her that time was advancing and she was *not*. So she hurriedly turned about, and pursued the grass-grown avenue, which presently became almost lost in the wide, surrounding pasture.

At first it ascended a gentle incline, over which numbers of sheep were scattered; some, who were reposing in her very track, rose reluctantly, and stared stolidly as she approached. On the top of the hill she came upon a full view of the castle, and was filled with a sense of injury and disappointment at having been deceived by such a high-sounding title. Certainly there *was* a kind of square, old keep, out of whose ivy-covered walls, half a dozen large modern windows stared with unabashed effrontery. But a great, vulgar, yellow house, with long ears of chimneys, and a mean little porch, had evidently married the venerable pile, and impudently appropriated its name. “Yes,” murmured Helen to herself, as she descended the hill, “uncle showed his sense in calling it simply ‘Crowmore’; a far more suitable name, judging by the rookeries in the trees behind it, and the flocks of crows—more crows—who are returning home.”

An iron fence presently barred her further progress along the almost obliterated avenue, and, keeping by the railings, she arrived at a

rusty gate leading into what might once have been a pleasure-ground,—but was now a wilderness. Traces of walks were still visible, and outlines of flower-beds could be distinguished—with a little assistance from one's imagination;—flower-beds, in which roses, and fuchsias, and thistles, and ferns, were all alike strangled in the cruel bonds of “Robin round the hedge.” She passed a tumble-down summer-house—a fitting pendant to the gate lodges—and some rustic seats, literally on their last legs. Everywhere she looked, neglect and decay stared her in the face.

As she pushed her way through a thicket of shrubs, that nearly choked a narrow foot-path, she observed a tall man, like a game-keeper, approaching from the opposite direction. He wore a peaked cap, drawn far over his eyes, and a very long black beard, so that his face was almost entirely concealed; he was dressed in a shabby shooting-coat, and gaiters, and carried a bundle of netting on his back, and a stick in his hand. As he stood aside, so as to permit her to pass, she

had a conviction—though she could not see his eyes—that he was scrutinizing her closely; nay, more, that he halted to look after her,—as she ceased to hear the onward tramp of his heavy, clumsy boots. Another two minutes brought her to a little wicket, which opened on a well-kept gravel drive, a complete contrast to the overgrown jungle which she had just quitted. There was no one to be seen, not even a dog, though a clean plate and well-picked bone testified to a dog's recent dinner. The hall door stood wide open, (Irish fashion,) but no knocker was visible,—neither could she discover a bell. She waited on the steps for some minutes in great perplexity, and gazed into a large, cool, stone-paved hall, crossed here and there with paths of cocoanut matting, lined with strange ancient sporting prints, and apparently opening into half a dozen rooms. Not a sound was audible save the bleating of the sheep, the cawing of the rooks, and the loud ticking of a brazen-faced grandfather's clock, that immediately faced the stranger. Suddenly a fresh young voice came through an open door, so near

that Helen gave a little nervous start; a fresh young voice with an undeniable Irish accent, and this was what it said,—

“Dido, Dido! do you want to *boil* the mignonette, and all the unfortunate flowers?”

Emboldened by this sound, the new arrival rapped loudly on the door with her knuckles, and the same melodious brogue called out,—

“If that’s you, Judy, no eggs to-day!”

“Deed, then, Miss Katie,” expostulated a somewhat aged and cracked organ, “I’m not so sure of *that*.—We are rather tight in eggs, and you were talking of a cake, when the young lady comes—”

By this time the young lady had advanced to the threshold and looked in. She beheld a large, shabby dining-room, with three long windows, heavy old furniture, and faded hangings; a stout girl with fair curly hair, sitting with her back to the door, knitting a sock; her slender sister—presumably that Dido, who was working such destruction among the flowers—was stooping over a green stand covered with plants, which she was busily watering, with the contents of a

small copper tea-urn ; and a little trim old woman, in a large frilled cap, was in the act of removing the tea things. Helen's light footfall on the matting was inaudible, and she had ample time to contemplate the scene, ere the servant, who was just lifting the tray, laid it down and ejaculated,—

"The Lord presarve us !"

The girl with the tea-urn turned quickly round, and dropping her impromptu watering pot, cried,—

"It's Helen, it must be cousin Helen !" running to her, and embracing her. "You are as welcome as the flowers in May. This is Katie,—I'm Dido.—We went to meet you in the morning by the twelve o'clock train ; how in the world did you get here ?"

All this poured out without stop, or comma, in a rich and rapid brogue.

"I missed the early train and came on by the next. I got a seat on the post-car, but the horse ran away and upset us, so I preferred to walk to the end of my journey. I told the man, Larry ——, Larry ——"

"Larry Flood, miss," prompted the old

woman eagerly. "A little ugly sleveen of a fellow—with a lip on him, would trip a goat!"

"Now, Biddy, how can you be so spiteful," remonstrated Katie, with a laugh, "and all just because he wants to marry Sally."

"That's the name—Larry Flood," continued Helen. "I told him I would walk, and he left my bag at the—the gate."

"Oh! so you came by the old avenue! and a nice way Larry treated you! Just wait till I see him," said Dido. "How long were you at the door, Helen?"

"About five minutes."

"And why on earth did you not come in?"

"I was looking for the bell or the knocker," she answered rather diffidently.

"And you might have been looking for a week, my dear! They are conspicuous by their absence. We don't stand on ceremony here; you either hammer with a stone—there is one left on the steps for that express purpose, only, of course, *you* never guessed its use,—or you dispense with the stone, and walk in—the door stands open all day long,—precisely as you see it."

"But, of course, you shut it after dark?"

"Yes, in a fashion; we put a chair against it just to keep the sheep from coming in! The lock is broken—it was taken off weeks ago by Micky the smith, and he has never brought it back yet. Now, I see you are horrified, Helen!—but this is not London—there are no thieves or housebreakers about, and we are as safe as if we had twenty locks and bolts. Here, Biddy," to the old servant, "Miss Denis is starving; bring up the cold fowl, and some more of those hot cakes, as fast as ever you can. Helen, give me your hat and jacket, and sit down in this arm-chair this minute, and relate every one of your adventures without delay."

It was impossible to be shy with Dido and Katie; in a few moments their cousin felt perfectly at home, and they were all holding animated eager conversation, and talking together as if they had known each other for weeks. Katie was an incessant chatter-box; no matter who was speaking, her voice was sure to chime in also, and to keep up a running accompaniment similar to the

variations on a popular air! She was fair, very plump, and rather pretty,—with the beauty of rosy cheeks, bright eyes, and curly locks. Dido, the eldest, was tall, and graceful, with a head and throat, that would have served for a sculptor's model; she had quantities of brown hair, and greenish-grey eyes. Without being exactly handsome, she had a look of remarkable distinction, and as she stood at the table busily carving a fowl for the delectation of her hungry guest, that guest said to herself, that her cousin Dido, for all her threadbare dress and washed-out red cotton pinafore, aye, and her brogue,—had the air—of—yes—of a princess!

“When shall I see uncle?” inquired his niece, with dutiful politeness.

“Oh, the *Padré* never appears in the day-time,” replied Katie, “and he only goes out with the owls; but he will come down and welcome you, of course. He is very much occupied just now,—and grudges every moment, his time is so precious.”

A grunt of scornful dissent from the old woman, here attracted Katie's notice, and

once more resuming her knitting, and her chair, she said,—

"Well, what's the matter now, Biddy, eh? Tell me, what do you think of Miss Denis?" speaking precisely as if Miss Denis were a hundred miles away.

Biddy, thus adjured, immediately laid down a plate, and resting her hands on her hips, surveyed the new-comer as coolly and deliberately as if she was a picture.

"Shure, I'm no great judge, Miss Katie! but since you ax me,—I'll just give ye me mind. I think she's a teetotally beautiful young lady,—and that it would be no harm if there was twins of her!"

Helen coloured and laughed, and Dido exclaimed, "Well, that's more than you ever said of *me*, Biddy, and I'm your own nurse-child that you reared ever since I was six months old—you never wished for twins of *me*!"

"Troth, and why would I? Many and many's the night that I lost me rest along of you. Aye, but you wor the peevish little scaltheen! Wan of *you* was plenty!"

“And you never called *me* a teetotally beautiful young lady! I’m offended.”

“Arrah, Miss Dido, sure you would not be askin’ me to parjure myself!” retorted Biddy, with some warmth. “Ye can see with your own two eyes, that your cousin is a sight better-looking than ayther of yees; but you are a lady all out! The Queen herself need not be ashamed to be seen walkin’ with ye! Sure, and aren’t you cliver! and isn’t that enough for you? They don’t go together, I’m thinking—great wit, and great looks!”

“Biddy MacGravy,” replied Dido, with great solemnity, “you started off very nicely, —wishing Miss Helen was a twin—but now you have spoiled everything! I really think you had better go before you say something worse,—I really do.”

“And sure, and what did I say but what was the pure truth?” folding her arms over her white apron, and evidently preparing to discuss the subject exhaustively.

“You have merely told her, that it was

doubtful if she was a lady, and that it was very certain that she was a fool."

"Ah, now, Miss Dido!" in a tone of mournful reproach, "see, now, I declare to goodness — Whist! here's the masther." And seizing the tray, the nimble old woman vanished like a flash.

"She is quite one of the family," explained Dido, "and says just what she pleases. You would never imagine that she had been for years on the Continent! She acquired nothing there, but the art of making cakes and coffee—"

"And paying compliments," amended Katie, with a giggle.

At that moment the door opened slowly, and a tall, but bent, white-headed gentleman entered the room. He had a noble head, a cream-coloured beard, reaching almost to his waist, and sunken, dark eyes, that looked out on the world abstractedly, from beneath a penthouse of shaggy brows. His hands were long and thin, with singularly claw-like fingers, through which he had a habit of drawing the end of his beard, as he conversed.

He was attired in an easy, grey dressing-gown, a black skull-cap, and red list slippers.

Helen rose as he approached, and extended one of his long hands. His dreamy eyes flashed into momentary life, as he said, in a curiously slow, nasal voice,—

“And this is my English niece! Niece, I am glad to see you, for your own sake,—and for your father’s.—He was a worthy brother to my wife! I hope you will be happy here. By-the-way, how did you come?”

Before Helen could open her lips, Katie, the irrepressible, had begun to relate her recent experiences, as volubly as if she herself had been a passenger by the Irish mail; not to mention the Terryscreen post-car!

But long ere her recital had come to an end, her parent’s thoughts were miles away—presumably in the clouds. At length the sudden cessation of the narrative, recalled him to the present once more, and speaking very deliberately, he said,—

“You must take us as you find us, niece. We live far beyond any sordid, worldly circle, enjoying simple, domestic, retirement, and a

purely rural life. Our wealth is that of the mind. In mundane substance we are poor, but at any rate we can offer you *one* thing, without stint—accept a welcome." And with a wave of his hand, implying that he had endowed Helen with some priceless treasure, and a bow signifying that the interview was at an end, Mr. Sheridan glided noiselessly away, leaving, as was his invariable wont, the door wide open behind him.

CHAPTER V.

BARRY'S GUESS.

“O many a shaft at random sent,
Finds mark the archer little meant.”—*Scott*.

THE following morning Helen was formally conducted round the premises by her cousins. They explored the tangled shrubbery, the garden, and the yard; the latter was empty,—save for a clutch of chickens, and a flock of voracious ducks,—and at least half the offices were minus roofs and windows.

“The whole place was tumbling down,” explained Dido; “and as the *Padré* could do nothing, Darby Chute said he might just as well make the best of a bad job, and he took off the doors and rafters for fire-wood.”

“Yes, and Barry was *raging*,” supplemented Katie. “Barry is papa’s heir.—He is our cousin, and lives a mile away on the Terryscreen road. He says there won’t be a

stick or a stone left together before long. He often comes over here. He declares the place is going to rack and ruin."

Helen glanced at the range of yawning, roofless stables, and could not help sharing in Mr. Barry's rueful anticipations. And Katie, interpreting her glance, added hastily,—

"But papa will restore it all some day. He always says his brain is his Golconda, and he will be a Cræsus yet. He says—"

"This is the dairy," interrupted Dido, suddenly turning a big key. "Mind the step."

It struck Helen that she frequently broke in upon the current of her sister's narratives, especially when she was attempting to give detailed descriptions of the sayings and doings of their gifted parent.

"This is the dairy," she repeated, ushering them into a white-washed, red-tiled room, filled with big, brown pans of wrinkled cream, tubs of milk, and golden pats of butter.

"We have five fine cows," she said, twirling the key round her thumb. "We sell the

milk about the place, and the butter in Terry-screen market; Sally MacGravy takes it in every Thursday. She is cook, laundress, and dairymaid. The 'Master' churns. By-the-way, I wonder where he is?"

"Where he ought not to be, you may be perfectly certain," responded Katie. "Yes, I see him, he is over in the turf-house." And sure enough, just above the half-door of a great shed, the ill-tempered face of an old brown mule was visible.

"And that's the 'Master,'" exclaimed Helen, rather relieved in her own mind; for visions of her eccentric uncle wielding the churn-dash had somewhat disturbed her.

"Yes," said Dido. "We call him the 'Master' because the name suits him so beautifully. He goes and comes exactly as he pleases, opens doors and gates, and walks in and out at pleasure. He was here when we came, eight years ago, and is consequently the oldest inhabitant. Some people say he is forty years of age; but at any rate he is older than any of us! Now let us go to the garden."

The garden was of vast extent, surrounded

by high grey walls, and wholly devoted to fruit and vegetables. Grass pathways, lined with currant and gooseberry bushes, divided it into immense plots of potatoes, peas, and cabbages. In some places, so dense was the jungle of unwieldy bushes that these walks were quite impassable.

“What quantities of fruit you will have!” remarked Helen, to whom this huge garden was a novel sight.

“Yes, there will be a fine crop of strawberries—at least I hope so, for nothing pays so well,” rejoined the distinguished-looking, but practical Dido. “We make a good deal out of the fruit; and we work hard ourselves; not in fancy aprons, and with little trowels, but in real sober earnest; we plant, and prune, and weed, and water; and on the whole the garden is a financial success. Andy ‘All Right’ helps us. That’s him there in the next plot—the man without the hat. He minds the cows, and goes to the post, and makes himself useful. He is called ‘All Right’ just because he is *not* quite all there! Here he is now,” as an individual with a

spade over his shoulder, and minus hat and boots, came shuffling down a neighbouring walk.

Andy was a middle-aged man, who looked quite juvenile; partly on account of his very light and abundant hair, and almost white eyebrows, and partly because of a certain childish expression,—relieved by occasional flashes of very mature cunning.

“Well, Andy,” said Dido pleasantly, “you have a fine day for the young plants; how are you getting on?”

“Oh, finely, Miss, finely.”

“Here is our cousin.—Another young lady to help you in the garden, you see.”

Andy, in answer to this introduction, half closed his eyes and scanned her critically. After a long pause he scornfully replied,—

“Faix, I expect she’ll only be good for weeding, Miss Dido! And see here, Miss Dido, not to be losing all our day.—Will ye just tell me what’s to be done with them ash-leaved praties and the skerry-blues? for sorra a know I know!”

“I’ll go this very instant, Andy. Katie, just show Helen round the garden; but keep clear of the bees whatever you do.”

“I’ll tell you all about Andy now,” said Katie confidentially, taking her companion’s arm as they walked away. “You see what he is like! He was never very strong in the head at the best of times; but a mistake that happened a good many years ago, quite settled him.—A mistake about a murder.”

“A murder!” echoed Helen, looking with startled eyes, at the slouching figure, that was carrying off her graceful cousin.

“Yes. You must know,” continued Katie, now dropping into a tone of glib narration, “that Crowmore belonged to papa’s uncle, an old miser, who lived in Dublin and let the house, and garden, and a few acres, to a man of the name of Dillon. The rest of the land was managed by the old steward, who was a first-rate farmer, and as honest as the sun. But to return to Dillon.—He had a good-for-nothing son, called John, who never did anything but loaf and poach. In those days Andy was handy-man, or boy, about

the yard, and he and this John were always quarreling. One day John beat him cruelly, and Andy was heard to declare that he would certainly have his life ! Anyway, a short time afterwards, Dillon was found shot dead up at the black gate, between this and Bally Redmond, and Andy was taken up and lodged in jail. However, he was soon discharged, as it was proved at the inquest that Dillon's gun must have gone off accidentally, though some people say it did *not* to this day.—But some people will say anything.—At any rate, the whole affair gave Andy such a terrible fright, that he has never been the same since."

"And how is he affected ?"

"Chiefly by the sight of a policeman—a 'peeler,' as he calls him. At the first glimpse, he takes to his heels and runs for his life. He never ventures beyond the cross-roads, and would not go within a mile of the black gate, by day or night, for millions ; indeed, *no* one goes round that way after sundown," she added impressively.

"And pray why not ?"

"Because they say John Dillon walks."

"Walks?" echoed Helen, with a look of puzzled curiosity.

"*Haunts* it, then. Dozens have seen him leaning over the gate, just about dusk, and it is quite certain that he shoots the coverts as regularly as ever he did; I've often heard the shots myself."

"Poachers, my dear simple little Katie."

"Poachers, *real* poachers, would not venture on the Crowmore or Bally Redmond estates for all the game in Ireland! I'll tell you something more extraordinary. Dillon had a brace of splendid red setters. I remember them when we first came, very old, and nearly blind. They say for a fact, that when these dogs would be lying by the kitchen fire at night, they would suddenly hear Dillon's whistle, and jump up and rush to the door, and whine and scratch until they were let out; and then they would be away for hours, and come home all muddy, and tired, and draggled, as if they had been working hard. Several people have told me they have seen this themselves."

"No doubt they have. Some one imitated

John's whistle; I could do it myself, if I heard it once. Some clever poacher was sharp enough to make use of the late Mr. Dillon's excellent sporting dogs."

"I never thought of that," said Katie reflectively. "But every one here believes in Dillon's ghost. Darby Chute would not go up the woods after dark for all you could offer him; *he* believes in him, so does Barry. Barry met him once in the dusk; he was carrying game, and he looked so desperately wicked, and shook his gun in such a threatening way, that Barry confesses that he turned, as he expresses it, and 'ran like a hare.'"

"And what is this sporting ghost like?"

"He is very tall, with a long black beard, leather gaiters, and a peaked cap pulled over his eyes."

"My dear Katie, he was the first person to welcome me yesterday! We met each other in the shrubbery, face to face."

"Oh, Helen, *no!*" gasped her cousin, suddenly stopping and releasing her arm. "Were you not frightened to death?"

"Not I! I felt no qualms, no cold thrills;

I received no hint that I was in the presence of the supernatural.—He looked alive, and in the best of health.’’

“But he was *not*,” rejoined Katie in a quavering voice; “that was just John, the terror of the whole country. Oh, Helen, dear, I hope he has not come to you as a *warning*,” her voice now sinking to an awe-struck whisper.

“A fiddlestick! it was undoubtedly a human being going out to snare rabbits. There are no such things as ghosts; at any rate, if this was one, he smelt very strongly of bad tobacco! Come now, to change the subject, do tell me something more about your bold cousin Barry,—who runs like a hare?”

“Oh, Helen! please, now really, you must not laugh at Barry. He can’t bear being chaffed,” remonstrated Katie, in some dismay. “He is as brave as any one in reality.”

“Oh, indeed! and what are his other virtues?”

“Perhaps you may think him coarse and countrified, and too fond of contradicting every word you say, and laying down the

law; but he is a very good fellow in the main, if you take him the right way."

"And what is the right way? Please instruct me, in order that *I* may find him a very good fellow!"

"Well; pretend that you think he is conferring a great, great favour, and he will do anything for you. He can stand any amount of blarney, but no contradiction!"

"Strictly between ourselves, my little Katie, I don't think I shall like this cousin of yours."

"Exactly what he said of *you*," she exclaimed, clapping her hands in great glee. "He declared you would be a stuck-up English girl, with a grand accent, and a great opinion of yourself. He said you were sure to have had your head turned by all the attention you had received in those islands."

"Well, if it was,—which I do not admit, it has had ample time to go back again. Governesses are not often the spoiled darlings of society."

"But you are not a bit like a governess."

"Am I not? You should see me at Mrs. Kane's."

“Barry wondered very much that you came home unmarried,” continued Katie, who knew not the meaning of the words reticence and discretion, and delighted in the sound of her own voice. “He said it was either of two things—” pausing meditatively.

“Did he, really! how kind of him to give his mind to my humble affairs,” exclaimed Helen, with an irony entirely lost upon her cousin, who was now fighting her way through a small forest of currant-bushes, and discoursing as fluently as if she was sitting in an armchair.

“Yes; he said it was either of two things—Helen, mind your eyes with that branch! Either—I’ll give you his own words—either you were mortal ugly, or you had had a love affair, and the pigs ran through it,—meaning a disappointment, you know.”

Helen winced as though she had been struck, and if her companion had happened to glance round, she would have been astonished at the colour of her face—a sudden deep blush suffused it from chin to brow. She told herself passionately, that dislike was far too weak a term, to apply to this country

clown, whose clumsy curiosity had probed her secret to the very core. This to herself; but aloud she merely said,—

“Your cousin Barry must be blessed with a rich imagination?”

“Oh, no! he is not a bit clever; but he is uncommonly sharp. He rather prides himself—”

Whatever he prided himself upon, was not to be disclosed at present, for a sudden turn brought them close to Dido, who called out,—

“I thought I saw your heads above that thicket! I have to go to the Cross, to speak to Darby, would you care to come, Helen? You may as well learn all the geography of the place at once.”

To this suggestion she promptly assented, and in a few minutes was walking down the neatly-kept front avenue, whose gates opened on the Cross (or cross-road); the middle of which amply testified to the indefatigable dancing that took place on Sundays (for “Crowmore Cross” was what the assembly-rooms would be in some populous, fashionable neighbourhood). A dozen cottages were

scattered about, and the windows of one of them exhibited two long clay pipes, some red and white candy, and a ball of worsted, and on the strength of this rich display was called "the shop." Dido halted at the door of a comfortable slated house, and called out over the half door,—

"Is Darby within, Mrs. Chute?"

"No, me lady, he is not," replied a little withered old woman, dropping a curtsy; then, as her eye fell upon Katie and Helen, she said, "An' this is your cousin from England? The Lord spare you your health, Miss."

"And how are you yourself, Mrs. Chute?" inquired Dido sympathetically.

"Oh, I got a very heavy turn that last time, me lady; but that stuff you sent me, and the jam, did me a power of good. I'm finely now."

"Well, I'm very glad to hear it.—Tell Darby I want to see him this evening, please.—It's about the pigs—you won't forget?" said Dido, turning her face homewards as she spoke.

"Isn't it a funny thing, that of all the years we are here we have never been inside

Chute's house!" exclaimed Katie. "Mrs. Chute comes and stands at the door, but she never asks us further. This in Ireland, where the first word is, 'Won't you walk in, and take a sate,' is *odd*."

"Is that his wife?" inquired Helen.

"Oh, no; his mother. He was nearly being married once, to the daughter of a well-to-do farmer, but they fell out about her dowry. They 'split,' as they call it, over a chest of drawers.—I don't think he will ever marry now. Somehow the neighbours don't like him; they say he is very distant and dark in himself."

"I heard you were wanting me, Miss Dido," said a squeaky voice, which made them all turn round, with quite a guilty start.

Standing on the grass behind them (why could he not walk on the road?) Helen beheld a tall, elderly man, with sharp features and a pair of keen, grey eyes, set close together in his head. He had a coat over his shoulder, a stick in his hand, and a most deceitful-looking lurcher at his heels.

"Yes, Darby, I left a message," replied

Dido, quickly recovering herself. "It's only to ask you about selling the store pigs."

"Av they are fit,—and with all the feeding they are getting, they bid to be as fat as snails,—ye might sell them on the fifteenth, but mind you," shaking his head solemnly, "pigs is down—terribly down! And so this is your cousin, Miss Denis?" putting his finger to his hat.

"Yes; and you would never know she was any relation, would you?" said Katie "Would you guess we were cousins?"

"'Deed I would *not*. And I never thought them English ladies were so handsome till now," he rejoined, resting his hands on the top of his stick, and speaking in a deliberate, confidential squeak. "I declare that wan up at Bally Redmond has a face that sour on her, she gives me the cramps every time I look at her; an' her walk!" raising his stick and his eyes simultaneously, "for all the world like a turkey among stubbles. Now, av I was asked—"

"Darby, what *do* you think? Only fancy! she met John Dillon face to face last even-

ing!" interrupted Katie with extraordinary irrelevance.

A very curious look flashed into Darby's eyes. It came and went in the space of half a second, and he rejoined, in a peevish, argumentative tone,—

"And sure, and how would Miss Denis know him?"

"She describes him exactly; cap and all."

"Yes, but all the same. I'm positive that it was no *ghost*," supplemented Helen stoutly.

"Holy St. Patrick, do ye hear her!" ejaculated Darby, in a tone of pious horror. "Well, well, well; poor young lady; it's easy seen she's a stranger! Don't ye be for letting her out about the place alone after dark just now," he added in a sort of husky aside.

"It's rather early for him *yet*," grumbled Katie. "From August to February is his usual time."

"Yes, the shooting season!" rejoined Helen, with a merry laugh. "Nothing more is needed to persuade *me* that the notorious

John is anything worse than a common poacher!"

"Have your own way,—have your own way, Miss," wheezed Darby, irritably. And it struck her that there was the *soupeçon* of a threat in his narrow little eyes as he added,—“May be you won’t get off so *aisy* next time he meets you! If ye will be said, and led, by me, ye will not be going about alone afther dusk. And mind, if anything happens, and ye are found with the print of five black fingers on your neck”—spreading out his own horny digits by way of illustration—“and stretched as dead as a door-nail, don’t go and say afterwards, that ye waren’t warned.”

With this remarkable caution, Darby hitched his coat over his shoulder, nodded his head impressively, and then turning to Dido, said,—

“I’ll be up about them pigs this evening, Miss; but you need not be laying out to get a heavy price for them! I’m for my dinner now,” and with an abrupt nod, Mr. Chute plodded off.

“I’m sure you are shocked at his free-and-easy ways, Helen—at all their free-and-easy ways!” exclaimed Dido. “But they mean no incivility, and they take an interest in the—”

“Yes, Darby, I can see, is very anxious that I should not put myself in the way of being strangled by John Dillon. Really, it will be quite exciting to go out after dark!”

“And the *only* excitement we can offer you. You have no idea what a quiet place you have come to,” said Katie; “we have no society at all. Papa never returned people’s visits, or answered their invitations. He never goes out, excepting about the place, in the dusk; he is entirely buried in his experiments. People have all sorts of ideas about us; they think that the *Padré* practises the black art, and that Dido and I keep pigs in the parlour, and a threshing-machine in the back hall!”

Helen laughed aloud at this description. If Crowmore was shabby, it was beautifully clean; and if her cousins occasionally used the first thing to hand instead of a regulation

implement, the interior of the house was not merely neat, but tasteful.

“Of course, that’s an exaggeration,” said Dido. “But no one calls here, excepting the rector, Barry, and old Mr. Redmond. He comes from mere idle curiosity, to see if we are all alive and the house not burnt down—he *said* so! He and papa fought frantically about a Greek word the only time they ever met. We tried to cut him, he was so awfully rude to the *Padré*; but he would not see it, and he comes here, and sends us books, and baskets of hot-house fruit and flowers, and fish and game. We call it Mr. Redmond’s out-door relief. He is a kind-hearted old man!”

“And does he live alone?”

“No, there is Miss Redmond, his sister, a cripple from rheumatism, and his ward; a horrid, supercilious creature, and in the shooting season, he always has a house full. He rents the shooting of Crowmore as well. Papa lets it—he lets everything.”

Her cousin’s eyes travelled reflectively

along the extensive demesne wall, and she said,—

“Crowmore is a large estate, is it not?”

“Yes; but you need not run away with the notion that it is a fine property. We are as poor as rats. On the other hand, Mr. Redmond is as rich as a Jew.”

“Dido, do tell me who is the unfortunate English girl who has such a painful effect on Mr. Chute,” inquired Helen, as she and her relatives strolled up the avenue arm-in-arm.

“Oh, she is not nearly as bad as he makes out, though personally I do not like her,” replied Dido frankly. “She is the girl we were speaking of just now; a Miss Calderwood—Kate Calderwood—a great heiress.”

“Has she freckles and high shoulders?”—halting as she asked the question.

“How on earth did *you* know?” cried Dido in amazement. “Her shoulders are up to her ears, and she is as freckled as a turkey’s egg! But for all that they say she is engaged to be married,—and to such a good-looking man, to Mr. Redmond’s favourite nephew, Gilbert Lisle.”

CHAPTER VI.

“ THE FANCY.”

“ All impediments in fancy’s course
Are motives of more fancy.”

JUDY THE FANCY was one of the most prominent characters about Crowmore. She lived at the Cross, and haunted that well-beaten thoroughfare from early morn till dewy eve. Despite her name, “The Fancy” was certainly no beauty; she had a yellow, wrinkled face, a pair of greedy little black eyes, and features which bore a ludicrous resemblance to a turnip ghost. Although she went barefooted, she wore good, warm clothes, and a respectable white cap; and no stranger could have guessed at her profession until she struck up her habitual whine of—“Give the poor ould woman the price of a cup of tay, your honour, the price of a cup of tay, and

I'll pray for ye; andeed ye might do worse than have the prayers of the poor!"

Sitting basking at her post, she taxed all comers, and taxed them most successfully; for the little world of Crowmore were mortally afraid to draw down the "Fancy's" tongue, and she received propitiatory offerings of sods of turf, and "locks of male" from her own class, and numerous sixpences, and coppers, from well-to-do neighbours.

She was the mother of Andy All Right, and looked to the Castle with confidence for the supply of her wardrobe, and praties, and sweet milk. She would sorely vex the spirits of those who figuratively buttoned up their pockets, by loud, uncomplimentary remarks on their personal appearance, painful allusions to family secrets, and dismal prophetic warnings of their future downfall. Many a stout-hearted man would rather (if he had no small change) go a round of two miles, than run the gauntlet of the "Fancy's" corner.

She had also other means of levying tribute that rarely failed; not begging with gross directness, or angry importunity, as I

regret to say was her occasional wont, but merely exclaiming aloud, as if talking to herself,—

“Musha! and it’s Mrs. Megaw! and ’tis herself has the finest young family in the whole side of the country; faix, no one denies that, not wan; and signs on it, ’tis the mother they takes afther!”

Or to a victim of the sterner sex (who are equally vulnerable in such matters),—

“And so that’s Tim Duffy!”—in a tone of intense surprise—“sure, an’ I hardly know him. Troth, and it’s a *trate* to sit here and see the likes of him going by. It’s an officer in the army he should be, instead of trailing there afther a cart of turf!”

These little speeches, had an excellent effect, and generally bore a rich harvest. She had also an unfailing method of raising a spirit of emulation among her benefactors. As for instance, having received, we will say sixpence, from some charitable hand, she would turn it over rather contemptuously in her palm, and exclaim, in a tone more of sorrow than of anger,—

“ Well, I always thought ye were as free-handed as Mrs. Ryan ; and *she* never asks me to look at less than a shilling ! But maybe ye can’t so well afford it, dear ; and God bless ye all the same.”

As Helen and her cousins returned from church on Sunday, they descried the “ Fancy ” sitting on the hall door-steps ; a clean capon her head, and a pipe in her mouth.

“ Your servant, ladies,” she said, without rising, and gazing over their heads in a rather abstracted (not to say embarrassing) fashion.

“ Well, Judy, and what is it to-day ? ” inquired Dido.

“ Oh, it’s only Mr. Barry. He is inside ” —with a wave of her pipe. “ He is a Justice of the Pace now, and I want him to do a small turn for me. Just go in and don’t trouble yourself about me, dearie.”

“ So Barry is here ! ” cried Katie, visibly delighted. “ What brings him ? Sunday is never his day ! ”

“ No,” admitted her sister, as she followed her into the hall ; “ but he has come to see

Helen ; and it gives him an excuse for his best clothes.”

Two large pointers with swaggering bodies, animated tails, and muddy paws, now rushed out of the drawing-room to meet them ; and in the drawing-room, extended full length on the sofa, in an easy, negligent attitude, they discovered the pointers’ master. Turning his face towards the door, he said,—

“So you are back at last,” then rising slowly, and putting his boots on the ground, he raised himself to his full height, shot his cuffs, and stared fixedly at Helen, and she at him (it must be confessed) ; he was far, far worse than she had expected. She beheld a middle-sized man, with bandy legs, a red face, and beaming countenance,—lit up by an inward sun of self-complacency—dressed in a short cutaway coat, a white waistcoat, and brilliant tie,—the sleeves of his coat and the legs of his trousers revealed an unusual margin of red wrist and grey stocking ; but these discrepancies did not occasion the smallest embarrassment to their wearer.

“I hope you have been pretty comfortable,

Barry?" inquired Dido, with a rueful glance at the tumbled cushions and anti-macassars.

"No; that old bench of ours is as hard as a board! This is Miss Denis, isn't it? Miss Denis," laying his hand on his heart, and making a low bow, "your most humble."

Which salute the young lady acknowledged by sweeping him a somewhat disdainful curtsey.

"Many in church?"—now looking at Katie.

"Oh, the usual set—Reids and Redmonds. Mr. Redmond walked down the avenue with Helen. Helen, you have certainly made a conquest *there*."

"Of course she has," quoth Barry, seating himself; "it is not every day he sees a pretty girl in these parts." Thus administering a compliment to her, and a backhander to his cousins in the same breath.

"What was Miss Calderwood saying to you, Dido?" inquired Katie,—totally ignoring the foregoing agreeable speech!

"Oh, she talked of the weather, and about Helen. She wanted to know when she came,

how long she was going to stay, and if it was true she was a governess?"

"Odious girl!" cried Katie, "she has a knack of asking nasty questions. I can't endure her—nor the glare of her cold grey eyes."

"Oh, she is not a bad sort of young woman," protested Barry, sticking his thumbs in the arm-holes of his waistcoat, and leaning back in his chair. "She and I get on first class; but all the same, and quite between ourselves, girls, I would never think of marrying her!"

Helen stared in astonishment. Unquestionably here was a creature who pressingly invited the most inflexible snubbings! He on his part had been gazing at her with untrammelled amazement and admiration, and now that these feelings had slightly subsided, began to engage her in conversation.

"And how do you like this part of the world?"

"Very much indeed."

"Humph! I would not have thought you were so easily pleased; it will seem uncom-

monly dull after all your fine times in the East; there you had balls, and parties, and admirers by the score."

Helen drew up her neck, and looked dignified, and he said to himself, "Ha, ha, my fine madam, I'll have to take you down a peg, if that's your style."

"Had you a comfortable situation in London at that school?"

"Yes, thank you," she replied haughtily.

"Well, we shall not allow you to go back this long time! Dido, we must take Helen (could she believe her ears?) over to the band at Terryscreen, next week. *I'll* treat you all at the hotel. You don't mind me calling you Helen, do you? You know we are all cousins here!" concluded Barry with a discriminating readiness to claim kinship with a pretty girl.

"Yes," he said to himself, "Katie and Dido were not bad in their way, but this new connection was really splendid!"

In his mind's eye he already saw himself proudly parading her at the band, and driving his intimates, and maybe the officers (who

were *not* his intimates) simply mad with envy. She was a little bit stiff now, but that would soon wear off.

“And how is the great inventor?” he inquired facetiously.

“As usual,” responded Dido, “quite well and very busy.”

“Is luncheon ready? for I’m as hungry as a hawk,” he said. “I hope you have got something decent to-day. None of your bacon and eggs! Mind, Helen, you don’t let them starve you, they are by no means liberal with their butcher’s meat,” and he laughed uproariously, and evidently considered that he had said something exquisitely witty.

“We always have meat on *Sundays*,” said Dido sarcastically, as she led the way to an excellent repast in the dining-room.

When Barry had taken the edge off his appetite, which he compassed in a manner that excited Helen’s disgust, he looked across at her, and said abruptly,—

“What’s the name of those islands you were at?”

“The Andamans.”

“You had fine times ; twenty men to one girl, and no end of tennis and parties ; it’s the other way about here,” grinning complacently, “twenty girls to one man, and no parties, balls, or fun of any kind.”

“I was only at one dance all the time I was at Port Blair.”

“Port Blair ! *now* I have it !” suddenly laying down his knife and fork, and speaking in a loud, exultant tone, “I *thought* I had heard of the place somewhere. Girls, I’ll tell you who was at those islands for months, old Redmond’s nephew ! I say, Helen, did you ever come across a fellow, of the name of Lisle ?”

“Yes, I knew him,” returning his gaze with calm, untroubled eyes.

“He was there for a long time. What was the attraction, eh ?”

“How can I tell you ? Sport, I believe.”

“Oh !” with a palpable wink at Katie. “Sport ! There are a good many different kinds of *sport*.—And now tell me what you think of him.”

"I'm not prepared with an opinion at such short notice."

"Which means that you don't like him! Neither do *I*. Come, that's one bond of union—give us your hand on it," jumping up and stretching an eager red member across the table, where it remained alone and unsought!

"I never said that I did not like Mr. Lisle," returned Helen, with freezing politeness.

"Oh!" drawing back visibly affronted. "So that's the way with you, is it? Well, he is not a bad-looking chap, and you know he is a great catch! Plenty of *other* girls would give their ears to marry him."

"Pray explain yourself, Mr. Sheridan," said Helen, fiercely. "Do you mean me to understand that *I* would have given my ears to marry him?" Her eyes were flashing and her colour rising, and there was every indication of a domestic storm.

"Don't mind him! Don't mind him!" cried Katie, gallantly turning the tide of battle, "it's only his chaff; he *loves* to put

people in a passion. Barry, you must really remember that Helen is not used to your jokes *yet*."

"Nor ever would be," thought that young lady, wrathfully.

"Oh, well, no offence, no offence; I did not know you were so *touchy* about him! He is a great favourite with the old boy—I mean his uncle,—but he is hardly ever here, always rambling about the world. I think myself, he is by no means the saint his fond relations imagine, and that he has a screw loose somewhere."

"And I'm sure he has not," rejoined Dido, hotly. "I like him, though I've only met him once or twice. He is a gentleman, which is more than I can say for other people in this part of the world. He is delightful to talk to, very good-looking, never gives himself airs, never brags,—"

"One would think you were his hired trumpeter," interrupted Barry, angrily. "What do *you* know, a girl like *you*! Believe me, still waters run deep. Give me a jolly, above-board chap that will light a pipe,

and mix a tumbler of whisky punch, and open his mind to you ! None of your cool, deliberate fellows, who smoke cigarettes, drink claret, and look as if you have seven heads when you make a little joke."

"I wonder if he is coming for the shooting," said Katie, amiably anxious to smooth matters. "He is fond of it, I know."

"Yes, and a fair shot, but jealous, as I found the only day I was out with him; *twice* he took my bird."

"Perhaps because you missed it," retorted Dido, coolly. "Sometimes he comes for a month's hunting in winter,"—turning to Helen. "He is a splendid rider, the best in the county."

"Well, I don't know about that, Dido ! Ahem ! I don't wish to praise myself, but I'll be glad to hear of a more forward man with the Bag Fox pack, than Barry Sheridan, Esq., J.P. Why, the very last time I was out I jumped a gate—a five-barred gate !" addressing himself specially to Helen.

"Then if you did, Barry," said Dido, rising and pushing back her chair, "it must

have been on the *ground* ! You know very well that you can't ride a yard. Your shooting I don't deny ; but when you boast of jumping five-barred gates, you know you are talking nonsense." So saying, she walked out of the room, followed by the two girls and Barry—who brought up the rear after a considerable interval, muttering wrathfully to himself.

As he passed into the hall, he came in full view of the "Fancy," seated on the steps. On beholding him, she called out in her most dulcet coaxing key,—

"Oh, my own darling young gentleman, you are a sight for sore eyes ; your 'Fancy' has been waiting on you these two hours."

"Then she *must* wait," he growled ; nevertheless approaching, with his hands in his pockets and a rather important strut.

"Oh, then, I know ye don't mane *that*. An' sure, now, miss," appealing to Helen, and languishing at her with her head on one side, "and isn't he an ornament to any country ?"

Helen became crimson with suppressed laughter, and was totally unable to utter any reply. However, her levity was not lost on

Barry, who made a note of it against some future occasion, when she should be repaid in kind.

“Well, Judy, what is it?” impatiently.

“Only a whisper, darlin’. ’Tis just this,” suddenly rising to her feet, “ever since I lost me health, come Christmas twenty years, and manny and manny a time before that, I washed for your mother—”

“Just cut all that part, will you?”

“Well thin, I’m here at the cross, a poor, lone widder, that has buried all belonging to me but Andy, and living on the charity of the public, as ye know, this blessed nineteen years! And now, a thief of a black stranger from beyant Terryscreen, has come and set himself down alongside of me. A *blind* man itself—any way it’s what he lets on—and every one knows I’m *not*; and they are all for giving to the poor dark creature. And sure, he has me ruined and destroyed entirely!” now raising her voice a full octave, and commencing to cry with alarming energy.

“You know if I did right I’d give you six weeks of Terryscreen jail for begging in the public highway,” said Barry, magisterially.

“An’ if ye did that same,” drying her eyes, and stretching out her hands, “I take these beautiful angels as mee witnesses, I’d rather have six weeks from your honour, than six days from another; and that’s as sure as I’m standing here!”

Barry was palpably flattered, and grinned, and looked at Helen out of the corner of his left eye to see if she was impressed, as much as to say, “What do you think of *that*?”—But, unfortunately, she was grinning also.

“Indeed, it’s bitterly cold in winter,” put in Dido, “and I’m not a bit sorry that some one has taken your corner. With Andy in constant work, and milk, and potatoes, and a pinch of tea from us, you know you will *never* miss it.”

“Arrah, Miss Dido! sure ye don’t know what you are talking about. And how would ye? If that rascalion gets a footing in my holding, it’s ruin and destruction that’s in it; just that, and no more! Why,” lowering her voice mysteriously, “sure it’s as good as a *farm* to me, darlin’! Aye, and

betther; it's all in-comings, and no stock, and no rint.”

This amazing confidence threw an entirely new light on the subject. Her three listeners stared at the old woman in respectful astonishment. They would have stared still more, could they have seen the comfortably-filled stocking that was hidden away under the thatch of Judy's cabin.

“Well, I can't stay here all day. I'll see what I can do for you,” said Barry, abruptly. “I've important papers to sign at home, and I must be off.”

The truth was, that the good gentleman was ruffled at Helen's attitude of repressed amusement, and at Dido's courageous candour; and he felt that he could not punish the offending couple more simply, or more effectually, than by removing himself, and leaving them to their own devices all through the long Sunday afternoon. He flattered himself that Miss Denis would *soon* learn his value.

Now Barry was the only eligible bachelor, in a neighbourhood where there were legions

of girls,—and was fully sensible of his own importance. In his secret heart, he believed that he had only to ask any young woman within a radius of say twenty miles, and, in his own homely parlance, “she would be thankful to jump at him.” And he felt conscious that he was dealing a cruel blow to the little circle at Crowmore when, seizing his hat and stick, and calling his dogs, he bade them a general farewell, and hurried down the steps.

His departure was the signal for the “Fancy” to take leave. Willy nilly, she escorted him to the gate,—to the intense delight of the spectators in the doorway. Vainly he tried to shake her off; vainly he increased his pace; his manœuvres were totally unavailing, his companion still trotted bare-footed beside him, gesticulating as she went with both head and hands. Her eloquence undoubtedly had its reward, for within a week “the dark man from beyond Terryscreen” had mysteriously disappeared, and she reigned in undisputed possession of her own warm corner.

CHAPTER VII.

"THE SLAVE OF BEAUTY."

"A 'strange coincidence,' to use a phrase,
By which such things are settled now-a-days."

Byron.

"HERE'S the comrade of your glove, Miss Dido," said Biddy descending into the hall, where the three girls, attired in their best summer dresses (being about to set forth for a tennis party at Bally Redmond), were impatiently awaiting her.

"Will I do?" inquired Dido, as she received her property. "Or is my hat too shabby? This is its third summer, you know!"

"An' deed, an' you'll do finely; 'tis only too grand you are! What call is there to be dressing just for the ould gentleman and Miss Calderwood, and maybe Misther Barry, that ye can see any day of the week

without putting yourselves to any rounds at all?" demanded Biddy in an acrimonious key.

"Oh, but this is to be quite a grand affair," protested her younger nursling. "We have had three days' invitation. It's my opinion," glancing at her pretty cousin, "that this 'at home' is given for *you*, Helen. Mr. Redmond has been here twice this week; you have bewitched him."

"I would not put it past him! for nothing grows old with a man but his clothes," cried Biddy scornfully.—"And shure he might give something dacent when he went about it, *I've* no opinion of these grass parties and chape entertainments. God be with the good ould times, when no one was axed to cross the door, under a dinner or a ball; indade, Redmond's own father used to give the height of high feedin' and kep' a butt of claret standing in the hall, just ready to your hand. But now, when you go out, no one even so much as axes, if you have a mouth on you?—for—by a drink of tay, that wake, that ye can see the bottom of the cup!"

Notwithstanding this gloomy sketch, the

three young ladies (to whom this "chape entertainment" was a delightful novelty) were not the least disheartened, and set off to walk across the demesne in the highest possible spirits, leaving Biddy and her apple-cheeked niece filling up the doorway, and gazing after them with the affectionate complacency of people who were surveying a creditable personal possession.

"There's not their like in the county!" exclaimed Sally, as she folded her massive arms across her apron strings.

"No, ner in ten counties! and what's the good of it all; will ye tell me that?" inquired her aunt peevishly. "There's Miss Dido, with the walk of a duchess and the voice of a thrush, and Miss Helen, a real beauty, and Katie not too bad entirely,—and not a sign of any one, watching wan of them!"

"I think Misther Barry has an eye on Miss Denis," insinuated Sally timidly.

"Is it that spalpeen? An' much good may it do him! She would not look at the same side of the road as him," returned Biddy fiercely. "He would not dar' to ax

her. Shure she's the only one of them all knows how to talk to him, and that quenches him rightly."

"That's true for you," assented Sally, nodding her head in grave acknowledgment of this indisputable fact.

"It's just killing me," continued the old woman, "to see them young ladies wasting their looks and their years here, slaving in the house, and garden, like blacks. What's to be the end of it, at all, at all?"

"The end will be that the masther will burn us all in our beds yet," replied Sally with angry promptitude. "What is he up to now?" glancing at one of the tower windows, out of which vast volumes of dense black smoke were curling in lazy clouds.

"Oh, the Lord only knows!" retorted her aunt impatiently, as she turned and walked into the hall with an unusually sour expression on her jovial old countenance.

"There's no daling with the likes of him," she muttered as she descended to the lower regions, "for he will nayther do wan thing, or the other; he won't go properly out of

his mind, and he won't lave it alone ; and he has me fairly bothered, and me heart is broke, with his mischeevous contrivances.”

Meanwhile, the three girls walked over the hill, and passed through Dillon's gate into the precincts of Bally Redmond, a fine park of seemingly endless extent, through which a beautifully-kept avenue, wound like a white ribbon, by clumps of beeches, rows of lime-trees, and great solitary oaks. Nearer the house, beds of brilliant flowers broke the monotony of the turf, and a long gravelled terrace was crowned by an ugly but dignified-looking mansion, that seemed an appropriate centre for the surrounding scene.

The Misses Sheridan and Miss Denis were the last arrivals, and were received by Miss Redmond in the pleasure ground. They found her sitting under a tree in her bath chair, arrayed in her best white shawl and a picturesque garden bonnet. She was a pretty old lady, with white hair, an ivory skin, and soft, caressing manners, and she greeted the three chaperoneless (to coin a word) girls with evident pleasure. Not so Miss Calder-

wood, the deputy hostess ; her welcome was by no means so gracious or so genial. She gave the two Sheridans a limp shake-hands, and bestowed a curt bow, and a long stare upon their cousin, the governess, who was looking remarkably pretty, and well-dressed, in one of the costumes upon which Mrs. Creery had once fixed her elderly affections. Evidently she did not think that Miss Denis was entitled to participate in the advantages of her acquaintance and patronage. However, Mr. Redmond more than atoned for his ward's deficiencies. He led Helen to a seat, introduced her to several of the county people, fussed about her rather too assiduously with tea and cakes, and other light refreshments, and finally took share of the same rustic bench, and engaged her entire attention.

Biddy's dismal forebodings had been brilliantly refuted. We notice the party from the Rectory (a considerable contingent), several remote families, half-a-dozen officers from a garrison town, and last, but by no means least, our friend Barry, standing

beside Miss Calderwood, with his hands behind his back, and such an air of serious criticism in his port, that one would imagine he was in an African slave-market, and contemplated the purchase of one or two of Mr. Redmond's guests.

Mr. Redmond himself never left Helen's side, and coolly (and I consider selfishly) dismissed all overtures respecting a game of tennis, with a bland wave of his hand. His beautiful young *protégée*, the desired partner of several eligible tennis players, was simply not allowed to have a voice in the matter.

"We are very happy here! Just go away, my good fellow, and leave us alone," was his complacent reply to each eager suitor. "You and I," to Helen, "will do better than that! we will stroll round the grounds together by-and-by, when all these energetic idiots have settled down to what they consider the business of life."

It never seemed to occur to him, that Helen would have preferred to join the said band of energetic idiots, or to have liked the company of a younger swain—and presently

he marched her off—to make a grand tour of the green-houses, and gardens.

Although Mr. Redmond was a little, round, old gentleman, who had white eye-brows, and wore an ostentatious brown wig—his heart was as young, as susceptible, and as fickle, as if he was three-and-twenty; he delighted in a pretty face, and especially in the company of a lovely, smiling girl, like his present companion, who, besides all her other charms, proved to be a most accomplished listener. As they walked, he talked—talked incessantly; indeed, the garrulous old personage became most gratuitously confidential about his property, his neighbours, and his nephew. “My nephew” was dragged headlong into every other sentence,—conversationally you came face to face with “my nephew” at each corner, his opinion was quoted on all conceivable subjects, from politics, down to black currant jam. Another listener might have been a little bored, and even irritated, but the pretty, tall girl in white, listened with a greedy attention, of which she angrily told herself, she ought to be

heartily ashamed.—The world was but a small place after all! Here, in what her Aunt Julia called "the wilds," she was strolling along, *tête-à-tête* with Gilbert Lisle's uncle, undoubtedly the very identical old gentleman whom he had mentioned as carrying on an ink feud with his father, but who was somewhat partial to *him*. Partial was no word for it! infatuation was nearer to the mark.

"I'm sure all those young fellows are mad with me for carrying you off," and he chuckled delightedly. "But, after all, it's no reason, that because I am an old fogey I'm not to have a pleasant afternoon, too, eh? From the time I could walk alone, I was always the slave of Beauty!" Here he doffed his hat, and made Helen a most courtly bow, at which she blushed and laughed.

"Yes, the slave of Beauty; all the same," resuming his hat with a flourish; "I never married, you see! The fact was, I butterflied about too long, and then it was winter, before I knew where I was! We are not a marrying family; there's my sister and

myself, and my nephew, I'm always preaching to him, but he laughs when I talk to him, and tells me to go and marry myself—impudent rascal, that's a nice way to speak to his uncle, eh? All the same, he is a fine fellow, as true as steel, and a more honourable, upright gentleman never drew breath; whoever gets him for a husband will be a lucky girl."

The corners of his companion's pretty lips curved somewhat scornfully, and she said to herself, "Shall I explode a social torpedo under this innocent old gentleman's feet, and say, I know your illustrious nephew; he asked *me* to marry him, and instantly took ship and left me; although he swore that he would return, as surely as the sun rose in the heavens! Query: Would it be agreeable to her companion to learn, that his paragon's idea of honour, was more elastic than he imagined!"

"Two or three times," continued Mr. Redmond, "I've tried to marry my nephew to some nice girl, and it has always been a dead failure, I've picked out a beauty, had her to stay, got up riding parties, driving

parties, and even moonlight pic-nics, (as if moonlight pic-nics were irresistible,) and it was all no go. Just as I thought everything was arranged, he would slip through my fingers like a piece of soap!" (precisely Helen's own experience). "Well, now I want to ask your advice. What do you think of those two yew-trees?" he demanded with rather bewildering suddenness.

"I—candidly, I don't admire them; they remind one of a church-yard."

"Exactly, and as I don't want to be reminded of anything so deuced unpleasant: down they shall come! And, now, what's your opinion of these new flower-beds they have just cut out in this ribbon garden?"

"I think they are not sharp enough at the corners; they are too much the shape of biscuits, the 'People's mixed.'"

"So they are! and shall we have them filled with pink verbenas, or crimson geraniums?"

"Crimson—that lovely new, deep shade."

"And crimson it shall be! Allow me to give you this rose!" suddenly plucking one as

he spoke. "My dear Miss Denis, I see that our tastes are identical.—I only wish I was a young man for your sake."

His companion made no response, but on the whole, she thought she preferred him as he was.

By this time, they had encountered various other promenading couples, and in a shady walk they came face to face with Barry and Miss Calderwood, and the latter, instead of passing by on the other side, with her nose in the air, halted directly in front of Helen, and said most abruptly,—

"Miss Denis, Mr. Sheridan tells me, that you were in the Andamans with Gilbert Lisle, —and knew him *intimately*!"

Helen coloured vividly, partly at this sudden accost, and partly because of that sting in the tail of the sentence, that thrice underlined word "*intimately*;" and Mr. Redmond, wheeling swiftly round so as to face her, ejaculated, "God bless my soul! you don't tell me so."

"Yes, I knew a Mr. Lisle in the Andamans," admitted Helen reluctantly.

"Only fancy! How immensely funny!" drawled Miss Calderwood.

To Helen there had been nothing specially amusing in the acquaintance, so she closed her lips firmly and held her peace.

"Why—why—I've been talking to you about him for the last hour, and you never told me this!" cried Mr. Redmond, eyeing her with an air of angry suspicion. "Eh, what?"

"You mentioned no name," faltered the young lady, feeling that verily this quibbling with the truth, was as bad as any downright lie; but, confronted by three curious faces, with the eyes of Barry,—of Gilbert Lisle's uncle, and Gilbert Lisle's betrothed, fixed imperatively on hers,—was she to appease their greedy curiosity, and boldly confess the painful reason of her silence? was she to proclaim the humiliating fact, that they were all staring at the girl who had been jilted by that honourable gentleman?

"Mentioned no name—neither I did! And how were you to know? Eh, what? Well, and what did you think of my

nephew?" inquired his loquacious old relative.

At this point-blank query, Miss Calderwood flashed a satirical look at Miss Denis, as much as to say, "What a silly, unnecessary question!" But Helen met her eyes with proud steadiness.

"I think most people liked Mr. Lisle," she answered, with well-assumed carelessness.

"And how long was he at the Andamans?" continued Mr. Redmond.

"About six months."

"Six months! And what was he doing there all that time? Any little entanglement—eh?" rather anxiously.

"I cannot tell you."

"Ah!—I see that you know more about Gilbert than you will admit!" exclaimed Miss Calderwood, with a sharp, accusing glance. "I believe girls in India are odious creatures. I have no doubt he got into some scrape out there." Helen blushed scarlet. "Yes," with an unpleasant little laugh, "your face tells tales. I suppose he was

drawn into some silly flirtation.—Men *are* such fools ! Well, it is very good of you to keep his secret ; it's more than others would have done ! " and with this insolent hint, and a patronizing nod, the heiress walked on.

Helen felt almost breathless with anger. " She had the passions of her kind ; " her eyes sparkled, her nostrils quivered, as she gazed after her receding rival. What had she done that she should be insulted, and flouted by this supercilious heiress ?

" Scrape !—stuff ! Flirtation !—rubbish ! It's all jealousy, every bit of it ! " cried Mr. Redmond, as he removed his hat, and cautiously passed his bandana across his forehead. " Gilbert is not a ladies' man—I only wish he was ! And so you knew him very well ? Eh, what ? "

" As well as most people, " turning away to break off a bit of syringa.

" Well, now let me hear all about him, " very eagerly. " He hardly ever writes ; and when he does, there's nothing in his letters. Come, now, what did he do ? How did he pass his time ? "

“I really cannot tell you much.—He lived a long way off on the mainland. I believe he spent his days in fishing and sailing. He liked the Andamans because they were a lazy, out-of-the-world region.”

“I hope to goodness, he liked them for nothing *else*. Eh, what? Six months’ sailing and fishing was the deuce of a time, you know! You don’t—just between you and me, you know—you don’t think he had any *other* attraction? Eh, what—what?”

“Honestly, I don’t believe he cared a straw for any one in the place,” raising her eyes gravely to his, and speaking with unusual emphasis.

“Oh, well, I fancy *you* would be likely to know,” rejoined the old gentleman, innocently. “We must have some nice long talks about Gilbert; but just now I’m afraid we will have to go back to the tennis ground; I want to have a chat with old Mrs. Morony. I need not tell you I’d much rather stay here, walking about with you,” he added, gallantly. “But I must not be too selfish; and I’ll give the young fellows a chance!”

So Helen was at last released from this purgatorial *tête-à-tête*, and permitted to join the rest of the company.

When she took leave of Miss Calderwood, (which I must say she did very stiffly,) she read more than a mere contemptuous dismissal in that lady's eyes; she saw suspicion, ay, and dislike, lurking in those shallow grey orbs; but Mr. Redmond wrung her hand affectionately at parting, and said in his heartiest manner,—

"And to think of your knowing Gilbert! Eh, what? Well, I have dozens of questions to ask you about him; I shall be over to-morrow or next day!"

"Poor Helen! I pitied you," said Katie, as they walked home. "It was too bad of Mr. Redmond to carry you off."

"*Il faut souffrir pour être belle*," added Dido, with a laugh. "What a dose you must have had of 'my nephew!—my nephew'!"

As far as the Miss Sheridans were concerned "the chape entertainment" had been a prodigious success. They had enjoyed

themselves immensely ; had played tennis, sipped tea, and strolled about the grounds under military escort. Katie's tongue, as she tripped along, went like the clapper of the proverbial mill ; but Helen was pre-occupied and unusually silent. To return *viâ* Dillon's Gate, at the hour of seven p.m., was a feat quite beyond the Miss Sheridans' courage, and in spite of their cousin's protestations, and remonstrances, they insisted on going round by the road, and entered Crowmore by the old avenue. As they turned a corner, they noticed Sally's portly figure speeding towards the Castle, with somewhat guilty haste, and a man approaching in their direction, with his hands in his pockets and a straw in his mouth. To Helen's amazement, it was Larry Flood.

"More power, ladies," was his brief, but novel greeting.

"A fine evening, Larry," returned Dido. "So you have been walking with Sally?"

"'Tis only wance in a way, your ladyship."

"Is Biddy still against it?"

"She's that much again it, that if I wor to go next, or near, the house, she'd just pick mee eyes out ! Maybe you'll put in a word for me, miss ?"

"I don't see why Sally should not please herself. She's old enough."

"Well, for that matter, we are both of us pretty long in the tooth ! But I'll have her before the priest, in spite of the old wan yit, though she *is* trying to draw down a match with Darby Chute !"

"Oh, *that* would never do !" exclaimed Helen with involuntary emphasis.

"I'm entirely of your opinion, miss," said Larry, turning towards her. "I see you're none the worse for that little tip off the car ! An' you're looking just as beautiful as a harvest moon !"

"And how is Finnigan's mare ?" she inquired, not to be outdone in politeness.

"Oh, faix !" scratching his head, "shure she nearly drowned herself, and me about a month ago. Coming out of Terryscreen, fair and aisy, we met a band of music all of a sudden on the bridge, and without the least

provocation, she just turned about, and leapt over the parapet, car and all ! ”

“ And did you go over, Larry ? ” asked Helen with benevolent solicitude.

“ Troth, and I did not. I stayed on land. We had terrible work to get her out, though she swam like an otter, and there was no great harm done, barrin’ the shafts again ; but the mails was soaking wet—just in a sort of pulp ; and the postmaster was raging and spoke very bitter. The end of it was, I had to get shut of the mare ! A horse on the road is well enough ; but when they show a taste for the water, it’s a different kind of driving is required. So I sold her to a canal boatman—and maybe she’s aisy now. She’ll be hard set to run away with the boat ! Well, she was a fine traveller ! ” he concluded regretfully.

“ And what have you now ? ”

“ Only the blind brown, till the fair of Banagher. He’s a hape of work in him yet, and there’s no fear of *him* shying. Well, Miss Dido, I’ll not be detaining you. You’ll mind and put in a word for me with

the ould “fostooke,”—I mane Biddy Mac Gravy. Tell her I’m a warm man, and an honest man, and a dacent man.—Sure all the world knows that! She’s taking her pigs to the wrong market,” he added significantly, as he abruptly touched his caubeen, and departed.

“Modesty, thy name is Larry Flood!” ejaculated Helen. “Every one knows he’s an honest man, and a dacent man!”

“Well, yes, he is in his way,” acquiesced Dido, “but HE knows who is the heiress of these parts, and that Sally is a splendid dairy woman, and has a fortune of forty pounds! not to speak of a second-hand gold watch!”

CHAPTER VIII.

“THE APPARITION.”

“And having once turned round, walks on,
And turns no more his head,
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.”

Ancient Mariner.

HOWEVER highly Mr. Sheridan's intellectual faculties might be rated by foreign philosophers, and corresponding *savants*, yet, like the typical prophet, he had no honour in his own country, and was credited by the most lenient, with wanting at least one day in the week! Even Andy All Right (who was dimly conscious of his own deficiencies), had more than once been heard to draw comparisons between himself and his master, which were by no means to the latter's advantage.

Helen saw but little of her uncle; indeed, only on those rare occasions, when he joined his family at dinner, and during that meal,

he rarely opened his lips, save for the purpose of swallowing food, his attention was wholly absorbed by some object not present, that monopolized all his thoughts. Now and then he would pause, lay down his knife and fork, lean back in his chair, and meditatively comb his beard with somewhat inky fingers; sometimes he would suddenly catch fire at a passing remark, and use it as a text for an unexpected and eloquent lecture on astronomy, biology, philosophy, or even hydrophobia; he had an excellent and intelligent listener in his niece, who followed him patiently through all the mazes of his varied subjects, anxiously endeavouring to glean information for the benefit of herself and her pupils (and what she could not comprehend, from its being enclosed in a labyrinth of words, she modestly attributed to her own mental density). As Mr. Sheridan proceeded with his discourse, his voice gradually gained such force, his words came so rapidly and so opportunely, that he seemed to be completely transformed. As he warmed to his subject, he would start from his seat, his

dark eyes flashing, his weird hands waving, he looked more like an impassioned Druid, invoking his countrymen to war, and human sacrifices, than a modern paterfamilias, presiding at a frugal domestic meal. Then, as suddenly as it had kindled, the fire would expire, he would pause abruptly, sigh, and presently push back his chair, and steal noiselessly from the room.

He lived altogether in the tower, behind barred and bolted doors, and through which Dido and Biddy had the sole *entrée*, and there,—secure against interruption, or indiscreet investigation,—he carried on some mysterious undertaking, to which he gave the rather vague name of “scientific research.” But loud explosive sounds, odours (not of Araby), and dense volumes of smoke, were the only outward symptoms of his industry.

During all the summer months every one at Crowmore pursued the even tenour of their way, with uneventful regularity. Larry drove the red car, and made surreptitious love to Sally, the “Fancy” clamoured at the Cross, Darby continued to plunder his master, and

that master remained shut up in his fastness, throwing away time, and money, with both hands.

Helen was an adaptable girl, and was now as much at home at the Castle, as if she had lived there for years; she had completely regained her health, and spirits, and was as full of life and energy as the indefatigable Dido. She toiled in the garden with unremitting industry, and took as profound an interest in the weekly "cart," and the result of Sally's "day," as did her cousins themselves. She had learnt how to make butter, to bandy blarney with her relatives, to baffle Barry's compliments, and, the greatest feat of all,—elude Mr. Redmond's cross-examinations.

By the middle of August, the bushes in the garden were bent down with fruit, and many and many an hour, the three girls spent picking strawberries, currants, and gooseberries for the public market, or for private sale. Time passed merrily enough in songs, stories, jokes, and riddles, but no story, song, or riddle, had half as much interest for the

Misses Sheridan as their cousin's experiences at Port Blair. This topic afforded inexhaustible entertainment to these two county mice ; over and over again Helen was called upon to recount her arrival, her first impressions, to describe boating, shelling, and picnic parties. Indeed, after a time Dido and Katie said they were perfectly familiar with the appearance of every one in the settlement, and declared that they almost felt as if they had been in the islands themselves ! Strange to say, that in the midst of all her glowing descriptions of people and places, Helen never once let fall the name of *Lisle*. It was—had her simple cousins but known—like the play of *Hamlet*, without the Prince of Denmark. She gave spirited representations of Mrs. Creery, and mimicked Lizzie Caggett's screech, and Apollo's languid drawl. She had an extraordinary faculty (I will not say talent,) for such imitations, a faculty that had been inflexibly nipped in the bud at school, an accomplishment that she doubtless inherited from her versatile Greek mother. Who would have guessed that, at a moment's notice, pretty,

demure Miss Denis, could take off the voice, laugh, and manner of any specified acquaintance? She had never practised this art till now, when she discovered that a few such illustrations, brightened up her narrative, and threw her audience into ecstasies of delight. —Helen was undoubtedly an unusually clever girl, when she could thus infuse interest, amusement, life, and romance into a story,—and yet omit the hero!

One evening, after early tea, the three girls were busy in the garden, sitting on little three-legged stools, among a thicket of bushes, picking raspberries into a huge tin can, when Helen—whose thoughts were sharpened by her cousins’ grinding poverty, their unremitting endeavours to make both ends meet, and their father’s apathetic seclusion—said suddenly,—

“Don’t think me a Paul Pry, Dido; but do tell me what uncle is doing.—Is he writing a book?”

“No; not now.—He *has* written several splendid pamphlets on gravitation, and about a dozen on wind; there are thousands of them

upstairs ; they did not sell ; they were above the average intellect ; indeed, I could not understand them myself. But then, I'm not clever ! ”

“ Yes you are, Dido,” said her cousin decidedly. “ You are a first-rate musician, a capital German scholar. I wish I had half your brains ! ”

“ That is nonsense, my dear—”

“ Papa has invented no end of wonderful things,” interrupted Katie proudly.

Helen looked up expectantly, and Dido answered,—

“ Yes ; little machines for measuring and weighing air ; but, unfortunately, his most remarkable contrivances have all been discovered before ! ”

“ And what is he doing now ? ”

“ He is constructing an apparatus that is to be the marvel of the age. It is to be an overwhelming success. A surprise to humanity ; but I do not know what it is ! ”

“ Can you not guess ? ”

Dido shook her head gravely, and Katie burst out, “ Poor papa is out of his element here. When we were children—indeed, till

Dido was sixteen—we lived in Germany, as you know, at a cheap little place, called Kraut, and the Padré had plenty of congenial society, and made many literary friends, who profess a great interest in his work still. He takes them into his confidence. They know all about it.—They often write to him,—”

“To ask for money,” appended Dido bitterly. “They are not real *savants* and inventors, and great literary lights, as papa fancies—at least, I don’t think they are. Certainly, some of our neighbours at Kraut were clever, intellectual people, but others, whom papa picked up in the train, or in the gardens, or the street, it’s my opinion they were all impostors. You remember the man from Baden, Katie; you remember the Pole; you remember the Italian who—”

“Don’t talk of them!” cried her sister impatiently. “They were all swindlers and thieves!”

“And still papa has faith in strangers!” continued Dido. “A man has only to claim him as a brother inventor, and say he is short of funds, and were he making an instrument to bray like an ass, the Padré would send him

a cheque for fifty pounds.—And yet he grudges himself a pair of slippers, and says he can't afford a door-knocker! I've no patience with these hateful foreign harpies!" she concluded, tossing a handful of fruit into the general receptacle, and rising as she spoke. "This can is nearly full," she added; "you two can finish it without me, and I must go in and weigh the strawberries." So saying, she tucked her stool under her arm, pushed her way through the bushes, and vanished.

"Dido is vexed," exclaimed her sister, looking straight at Helen; "and indeed it is trying sometimes, to think that while she works so hard to earn a few shillings, the *Padré* sends away hundreds of pounds to any person who chooses to write him flattering begging letters! And he spends a fortune on books—expensive scientific works. He orders whole boxes full; and when they come he never even opens them! There are a dozen great cases, all mouldering, out in the coach-house. When *mama* was alive she kept some of the money; and she and the old steward managed pretty well. After

they died there was no one—for of course the Padre could not have his mind disturbed about pigs and grazing stock. After a time he took a great fancy to Darby ; and Darby and Dido do their best—and very bad it is ! Barry wanted to manage the property, but papa was furious at the bare notion ! I myself, think it would have been a good plan, but Dido set her face against it ; and when she does that, you may give up your point. You have no idea how poor we are, Helen.”

Helen thought she had some glimmering idea,—they could not be poorer than she was ! her uncle having borrowed all her earnings, (with the exception of a few shillings,) shortly after her arrival.

“ What becomes of the rent ? ” she asked.

“ Oh, I don’t know ! It’s paid to papa.”

“ And the money for the grazing ? ”

“ Is paid to him also,” admitted Katie reluctantly.

“ And what has uncle done with his time all these years ? ” she asked impatiently.

“ Rome was not built in a day,” rejoined Katie rather confusedly. “ I believe he is

making something marvellous, and that it is nearly completed. Of course we are pinched now, but we shall be rich some day. I don't grumble, neither does Dido; for we believe the Padré will be the great man of the age, and that in years to come, we shall be known as the daughters of the celebrated Malachi Sheridan!"

Helen noticed, (not for the first time,) that Katie generally talked fluently of her father in her sister's absence; indeed Dido rarely alluded to him; on the contrary, she would turn the subject rather abruptly, when it touched upon him or his pursuits.

"Dido is not quite so sanguine as she used to be," said Katie, slowly filtering a handful of fruit through her fingers. "She has never been the same, since the Padré sent away Mr. Halliday,—her lover."

"Her lover! Dido's lover!" ejaculated Helen.

"Yes! don't say I told you, but she had one once. She did not meet him *here*, so you need not stare."

"Perhaps she may not like you to tell me

any more—so please *don't*,” entreated Helen, with extraordinary self-denial.

“Oh, it’s no matter!—it’s no secret, the Reids and every one know all about it. It happened two years ago. After papa’s long illness—Dido was completely worn out with nursing him, and the doctor said she must have a change to the sea-side—and as the rectory people were going to Portrush, she went with them, and was away for two months—it was there she met him. He had some appointment in India, and was only on six months’ leave. She came home looking quite beautiful—even Barry remarked it—and she was engaged to Mr. Halliday—providing papa made no objection. He wrote to the Padré, a very nice letter I believe, and what do you think the Padré did? he tore it up into little bits, enclosed it in an envelope, and sent it back by the next post!”

“Oh!” groaned Helen, “how frightful! and was Mr. Halliday nice?”

“*Very* nice.—Of course I don’t go by Dido,—but the Reids were enchanted with him. He came here, nothing daunted, and

insisted on papa giving him an audience. I was out—just my luck—but Biddy told me they were shut up in the drawing-room for an hour, and that she heard the *Padré* roaring and raving like all the bulls of Bashan. At last Mr. Halliday came out, looking very white and queer; he had a long interview with Dido,—and then he went away. Poor Dido, how she used to cry at night! She told me that Mr. Halliday wanted her to marry him right off, without papa's consent: as there was nothing against him, and he was ready to take her out to India then and there and give her a happy home, and she said she would have gone—only for one reason—”

“And what was that?”

“I've been trying to find out for two years, and never discovered it yet.”

“I wonder what it could have been?” said Helen, musingly—“want of money?”

“No! I'm sure it was not that, Mr. Halliday is rich. I've tried to guess it, and I've given it up at last as a bad job.”

“And so,” said Helen to herself, “her

merry, lively cousin Dido—whose wit and spirits rarely failed her—had had what Katie would call 'a disappointment,' too!"

"This can is quite full, so come along," said that young lady, rising with joyous activity. "Thank goodness, these are the last of these odious raspberries for this year."

The two girls had locked the garden gate, and were crossing the yard, carrying the can of fruit between them, when they were nearly knocked down, by Sally and Andy, who came running frantically in an opposite direction, and without the smallest apology dashed through the back door, which they slammed loudly after them. Prompted by very excusable curiosity, the spectators followed by the same entrance, and discovered Andy in the middle of the kitchen, looking as if his wits had entirely departed, and Sally wiping the perspiration from her face with the corner of her apron, and loudly expounding some terrible experience to Dido and her aunt.

"Oh, save us and send us, Miss Katie!" she exclaimed as she entered, "I'm after

seeing the frightfullest thing that walks above ground ! It was ayther an evil sperrit or the ould wan himself ! Oh, musha, musha, I never get such a turn in mee life ! Oh, Andy, darlin', what did we ever do to bring such a thing about us ? ”

But Andy was utterly incapable of making any reply, and stood trembling, and open-mouthed, in the middle of the floor.

“ But what *was* it ? ” demanded Helen, approaching the table and laying down the can.

“ Well then, miss, I'll just describe it, and I'll lave it to yourself to put a name on it. Andy and me was down at the far croft, looking at a sick cow, and were coming home, thinking of nothing in the world, when all at wanst, I saw within two perch of me, what I thought was a tree walkin'. I nudged Andy, and we both looked, and sure enough, there it was, as plain as plain, with big wings reaching down each side, and a long tail trailing after it ; ” here she was so overcome by the bare recollection, that she was obliged to stop and gasp for breath, and once more apply her apron to her countenance.

"Well, miss, it went by quietly, within about the length of this kitchen of us,—and never passed no remark, so we just took to our heels, and run for the dear life, and small blame to us. And now, Miss Dido, av I was to be hung in diamonds, I will never set foot outside the yard after dark!" she concluded with a whimper.

"Sally, I wonder at you!" exclaimed Helen, "*I'll* put a name to it, fast enough—it was the mule you saw! In the dark he looked larger than usual, his ears were the wings—they are big enough for anything—his tail—was just his tail!"

"Ah now, Miss Helen, get out with your jokes! Is it the mule I'm driving these eight year, and me not know him? Any way, I saw him in the harness room as I went out—it was never the mule, it was ayther Dillon in another form—or—" here she paused significantly, and left her listeners to complete the sentence for themselves.

The next evening, Helen was sitting out under a haycock, after tea, reading a venerable magazine. She had had a very fatiguing day, and overcome by the sultry, drowsy air,

she fell fast asleep.—After a pleasant little doze, she awoke with a guilty start, and discovered that the stars were out, and the midges had gone in, that the air had become chill,—and that she had been asleep. Somewhat ashamed of herself, she rose, picked up her book, replaced her hat, and was turning towards the house, when a curious trailing, whirring noise on the grass, arrested her attention. Glancing behind her, she beheld what seemed to be a colossal, winged figure, pacing the sward within ten yards of her recent nest. A figure somewhat resembling old Father Time, with pinions which rose and fell, expanded, or collapsed at will. She stood and stared, in blank bewilderment. The creature, like a gorged vulture, appeared to be making futile efforts to rise from the ground and fly! but, in spite of its exertions, and violent, almost passionate flapping of its wings, it still remained a prisoner to mother earth. *What* was it? Was it as Sally had suggested? Her heart stood still, for she now beheld it moving towards her! she felt her knees giving way beneath her,—her hair rising on her forehead; she leant against the hay-

cock for support, and tightly closed her eyes. Hearing no sound for the space of a minute, she ventured to open them once more, and it was nowhere to be seen. Seizing this opportunity, she flew across the lawn, and darted into the candle-lit, ever-open hall, from thence into the dining-room, where she sank into the nearest chair, gasping for breath. She had barely recovered the power of speech, and was about to explain her condition to her astonished cousins, when the door opened gently, and her uncle came into the room; he stood near the table, and looking at her fixedly with his coal-black eyes, said, in his usual slow way,—

"I'm afraid I alarmed you somewhat, niece—you saw me just now trying the apparatus."

Helen gazed at him blankly, unable to utter a word.

"You look quite foolishly startled; but come with me, and you shall be completely reassured. Dido and Katie," addressing his daughters, "rise and follow me, my children, and behold with your own eyes the fruit of my labours!"

CHAPTER IX.

“THE APPARATUS.”

“The flighty purpose never is o’ertook.”—*Macbeth*.

THE three girls lost no time in responding to this invitation ; they crossed the hall, passed through the door connecting it with the Castle, and ascended a rugged, spiral stone staircase in the wake of Mr. Sheridan, who preceded them at a swift pace,—carrying a light in his hand. Halting on the first landing, he threw open a door, and said to his niece,—

“This is my library. Here I think, calculate, and write. This room has been the birth-place of many a glorious inspiration.”

By the glimmer of one candle, Helen made out a large apartment, that seemed to contain nothing but books. They lined the walls, loaded the tables, and covered the floor. Here and there, they stood in untidy stacks,

as if cart-loads of volumes had been shot about the room at random. The books were doubtless ancient, for a disagreeable odour of fusty paper, and mouldy leather, impregnated the atmosphere, and Helen was glad to withdraw to the chill but less oppressive staircase,—when her uncle, with a dangerous wave of his composite, said,—

“ Now let us ascend to the ‘ *Locus in quo* ’—in short, to the laboratory.”

When they reached their destination, they found the same wild disorder reigned there as they had just witnessed below. A forge and bellows, a carpenter’s bench and tools, a lathe, quantities of peculiar-looking bottles,—presumably containing chemicals; a furnace, steel tools, newspapers, lumps of coal, bits of whalebone, and the remains of Mr. Sheridan’s dinner on a tray were all mixed up together in extraordinary confusion. In the middle of the room stood a large table, on which lay a mysterious object, concealed by a red cover. It was something long, something broad; but all further speculation was ended by Mr. Sheridan delicately raising the cloth, and

solemnly displaying, what looked like a pair of umbrellas blown inside out!

“I suppose you know nothing of aerostation?” he said gravely, addressing his niece.

She shook her head; shameful to state, the very name was new to her.

“It is the art—as yet in its infancy—of travelling through the air; an art that has ever baffled mankind. In me,”—pointing to his beard with a long forefinger,—“you see the fortunate inventor of a pair of wings, by means of which I hope shortly to make the first aerial voyage—and fly to Dublin.”

To an ordinary listener, this announcement would have seemed the mere raving of a Bedlamite; but the three girls were profoundly impressed by the inventor’s voice, and presence, and enthusiastic belief in himself, and they hung upon his words, with parted lips, and awe-struck eyes.

“It is quite true,” he resumed, “that Borelli and Liebnitz, both denied the possibility of any man’s flying. But Bacon, and Wilkins, thought as *I* do,” he added with a nod that implied,—“and so much the better for *them*!”

“ Observe this,” now tenderly holding up a wing. (It was of immense length, and seemed surprisingly light and flexible.) “ Here it is annexed to the shoulders, by means of mechanical contrivances ; these springs, and a certain amount of muscular exertion, waft a human body into the elements ! *Once* fairly afloat, a very slight effort, similar to a bird’s, will keep one going for hours ! The first ascent is the principal,—and indeed, I may say,—only difficulty. Fairly poised in the air, the process is ludicrously simple. The main idea is, to attach to one’s person some mass, which, by being lighter than air, raises itself, and the annexed incumbrance. But these details are rather beyond your mental grasp. To be brief, this little contrivance of mine blows into atoms all other modes of human locomotion—trains, steamers, carriages, bicycles,—their fate is sealed. We shall all be as the birds of the air in future. The boon to humanity will be incalculable ; and, believe me, the day predicted by good Bishop Wilkin is not far distant, when every man who is going a journey, will

call for his *wings*, just as he now calls for his boots ! ”

“ I hope you will make us each a pair, papa,” said Katie, “ whenever your own are finished.”

To this request her parent vouchsafed no notice, but continued to expound with increased animation with one hand, as he held up a pinion in the other.

“ Roger Bacon, the greatest genius the world has seen since Archimedes, was confident that it was possible to make instruments for flying, and that a man with wings, sitting in the middle thereof and steering with a rudder, may pass through the air. I quote from his *Opus Magnus*, which he wrote in the form of a letter, to that enlightened prelate, Pope Clement the fourth ! ”

If anything had been needed to convince Helen and her cousins of the practicability of the matter in question, the mention of Roger Bacon was sufficient ; and Mr. Sheridan, noting the expression of reverent attention on their faces, was kindled to still greater enthusiasm.

“Bacon was a marvellous man ! it is true that he indulged in chimerical notions with regard to prolonging life, and placed some confidence in astrology, yet the imputation on his character, of a leaning to magic was totally unfounded. He studied languages, logic, and mathematics ; his information was exhaustive, his premises sound, as in the case in point,” waving his hand dramatically towards the table. “And now, my children, I will attach these wings to my shoulders, in order that you may be convinced of their extraordinary value, and of the amazing dignity which they impart to the human body ! Dido, light another candle. No,—no assistance is required,—I can adjust them myself.”

Helen and her cousins, looked on with breathless interest, whilst Mr. Sheridan deftly arranged and strapped on the apparatus. Then he held himself erect before them, and commenced to pace up and down a cleared space at the end of the room, and as he paced to and fro, he continued to expound as volubly as ever, on the importance of his prodigious discovery.

If any cool-headed, matter-of-fact persons

had happened to climb the ivy, and look in through the shutterless window, and discovered the room dimly lit by two candles (placed on the ground), the grey-robed figure with trailing wings, lecturing with outstretched hands to a group of eager-eyed girls,—they would have unhesitatingly declared, that they were witnessing the exploits of the inmates of some private lunatic asylum.

“My dear children,” continued Malachi in an impressive tone, “in me you see, the instrument of introducing a discovery that will be of untold benefit to all mankind—wherever the wind blows, it will carry the name of Malachi Sheridan. Of course aerostation is as yet in its infancy,” tenderly stroking one of his pinions as he spoke, “but everything must have a beginning. Look at railways; they had *their* origin in an ordinary domestic kettle, and behold they now cover the face of the globe; this invention has to do with air, and like that element, is—sublime! I have made an exhaustive study of air currents; there are certain places where there is a continual brisk movement in various direc-

tions ; these will be the termini, the junctions of departure, the same as Waterloo or Euston—but again let me not take you out of your intellectual depth.—See how easily the apparatus works,” he exclaimed, pulling a small cord ; and it became evident, that he could extend or compress, his huge appendages at will. Now they towered above his head—now they spread out—and now they collapsed, with marvellous facility.

“Night is the only time, in which I can as yet venture abroad,” he said regretfully, “and there is something unsympathetic in the chill atmosphere after dusk, that is discouraging to aerial attempts. Would that I could go forth in full daylight, and spread out my pinions to the sun !”

“If you came into the garden, when Andy was at his dinner, you might manage it easily, papa.—We will keep guard at the gate,” said Katie, the ever practical.

“I’ll—see—about it—yes, yes, it may be done ! And you, Dido, my daughter, shall now have your heart’s desire. These will bring you riches—money—money in millions. Do not deny, Dido, that money is your idol ;

you worship money," he added, gazing at her austerely.

"I, papa!" she cried. "Oh, no!"

"Then why do you annoy me with your prayers and tears, craving money, money, money? What is money? A few miserable pounds of yellow ore; and they tell me that it makes a man happy! Miserable, miserable, wretch!" he exclaimed with angry scorn.

"But, indeed, papa—"

"There, that is sufficient!" he shouted, with a fiery flash of his black eyes.

"Niece Helen," turning to her, after a somewhat awkward interval, and surveying her critically, "you will doubtless make a graceful aerial figure. Let me assure you that a happy day is coming, when you may wing your way back to tropical lands, and migrate at pleasure, like the swallows, and the wild geese—"

Here he paused, and flapped his pinions so successfully, that both candles were instantly extinguished, and the company were left in outer darkness. Dead silence ensued, which lasted about a minute.

"Dido, you know your way," said her father at length, in his ordinary tone, "never mind the lights, the matches are below.—Go; I will no longer detain you, my children. I have some important details to accomplish that will occupy me for hours. Go—good-night, good-night."

Thus imperiously dismissed by this voice from the gloom, the three girls groped their way slowly, and carefully, downstairs, and finally into the hall, where, sitting down on the first seats they could find, they sat and stared at one another, in solemn silence. Of course Katie was the first to speak.

"I wonder if this will come to anything?" she exclaimed. "It's very wonderful—but then the Padré always thinks of things that never occur to other people!"

"It does seem to be a marvellous discovery," said Dido, in anything but a triumphant key. Was it the light, or what, that made her face look quite anxious and careworn? "Of course we won't mention what we have seen to a soul! eh, Helen?" glancing nervously at her cousin.

Helen nodded her head in impressive assent, but made no audible answer. Down among commonplace surroundings, and away from the spell of that imposing winged figure, with its sonorous quotations from Bacon and Wilkin—cold distrust came whispering into her ear. Could it be possible that she had discerned the mysterious reason, that held Dido to her duty? Could it be possible, that her uncle Malachi was *mad*?

CHAPTER X.

“IN CONFIDENCE.”

“No hinge, nor loop,
To hang a doubt on.”—*Othello*.

THIS is Dido Sheridan's birthday.—She is twenty-four years old to-day. Her cousin Helen's offering is to take the shape of this hat, which she is engaged in trimming with somewhat anxious feelings. This straw hat, a bunch of daisies, and a few yards of cream-coloured lace, have swallowed up her very *last* shilling, and there she sits, pinning, and twisting, and unpinning, and untwisting, in the greatest perplexity. Her thoughts are running upon charming constructions, that she has seen in milliners' windows in Bond Street, that looked so simple and yet were so effective (and so expensive). How were they put together? Certainly *not* by amateur fingers, my dear young lady! After a long struggle, sheer perseverance was rewarded

by a result that would pass admirably in Terryscreen, if not in Tyburnia. "Yes, it really looks very nice," she said to herself aloud as she held it up critically. Then, of course, she went over to the glass and tried it on! The next thing was to see how it suited Dido? so she walked to the door, and called "Dido" in her clearest treble.

"She's out in the garden, miss," returned a voice from the dining-room, "with a parcel of hucksters from Terryscreen; they are after the apples and onions."

Helen reached her hat from its peg, and ran down the steps, and in another moment was at the garden gate. There, in the middle walk, beside the sun-dial, stood Dido, rake in hand, sun-bonnet on head, solemnly bargaining with two weather-beaten women, whilst Darby Chute sat on the side of a wheelbarrow, and listened, and looked on, with a cunning and diverted countenance. Properly speaking, this selling of fruit and vegetables "all standing" was Andy's legitimate business; but, unfortunately, Andy was not to be trusted with finance! He had been known to ask half-a-crown for a head of cabbage,

and to sell a whole plot of cauliflowers for three half-pence!

"You are very stiff to day, Miss Dido," expostulated one of her customers. "Shure, I bought all Mr. Reid's apples at a shillin' a hundred, and you are talking of two! I wish I was sellin' to you."

"*Our* apples are the best in the country, Mrs. Carmody. You get a penny a piece for them, I know, and I cannot let you have them for less than what I say."

"Here's your cousin Helen a-coming," wheezed Darby. "Shure she thinks she's sharper than the whole houseful put together. Maybe she'll drive a bargain for ye, Miss Dido. Avick! avick! avick!"

"Oh, indeed, the less *you* say about bargains, Darby, the better," retorted Helen severely. "I wonder you were not ashamed to bring home such a price for those calves!"

"Shure, I can't help the prices, miss; calves is down—all stock is down, and what does a beautiful young English lady like you know about farming?"

"Not much, indeed! but I used to go marketing in London, and I paid thirteen pence

a pound for veal; and fancy a great big calf selling for twenty shillings! It's ridiculous!"

"I met Miss Katie and Misther Barry on the road there below," said Darby, clumsily turning the subject. "She was perched up on the back of his horse—on his saddle—and mighty unaisy she looked; faix, and so did the horse! All at wanst it gave a little lep, and down she came on the top of Misther Barry. Oh, she was not a happorth the worse—she fell into his arms! The horse tore off home, and Mr. Barry was left raging! I laughed, till I hadn't an eye in me head!"

Helen looked at him indignantly, and turning to her cousin said, "Dido, your hat is ready, come and try it on!"

"Mrs. Carmody, you can take the beans and the cabbages at your own price—I'm going in now," said Miss Sheridan, taking her cousin's arm, and so departing.

"Mrs. Mooney and Mrs. Carmody expect to get the things for nothing. I don't know which of them is the greatest skinflint! And Darby just sat there grinning, and never helped me a bit. He was worse than useless!"

"Never mind Darby, but come into the

drawing-room and put on your hat; you can see yourself beautifully in the glass over the chimney-piece!"

"It looks lovely"—taking it up admiringly. "Yes,"—advancing to the mirror—"and it suits me too! What do *you* think?"

Helen ascended to the fender-stool, so as to have a good view, and to be enabled to give her cousin the benefit of her candid opinion.

"I had no idea you were so clever with your fingers," continued Dido, "I won't know myself in a new hat. This will come in nicely for Mr. Redmond's tennis party next week. I should not be a bit surprised if we meet *my nephew* there!" and she laughed merrily.

Of course all this time she was contemplating herself in the glass,—and lifting her eyes to her cousin's reflection, to her astonishment she noticed that she coloured to the roots of her hair! With a sudden flash of comprehension she wheeled right about and looked at her curiously; but Helen moved hastily away, and walking towards the window, said,—

"Those daisies are too much at one side, they must come out."

Never mind the daisies, Helen! I'm going to be very impertinent—I'm going to be as bad as Barry. I'm going to guess something about *you*."

"Guess what?" sitting down in the window seat, and turning as if at bay.

"Guess something about 'my nephew.' Why did you blush just now, and why is he the only person you met at Port Blair, whom you never mention? Well, well," in answer to the expression of her cousin's face, "I see you don't like it, so I won't say any more. If you don't wish to give me your confidence I won't try to steal it."

After a moment's hesitation she added, with averted face,—

"I suppose Katie has told you all about *me*?"

"Yes, poor Dido! it was a hard, hard case," replied Helen, gently taking her hand.

Dido sighed, and nodded her head, and then remarked, in quite a cheerful voice, "I try not to think of it—it could not be helped."

An unusually long silence succeeded this speech, and at last Helen said, "What I am going to tell you, Dido, I have never spoken

of before, not even to papa. I have never put my—my—experience—into words—yet. I wonder very much how it will sound, both to you and me. No! You must not gaze at me like that, or I shall never be able to tell it. Look out of the window and listen. Dido," lowering her voice to a whisper, "you were right about Mr. Lisle."

"Yes," nodding her head with quick assent.

"You know everything about my life out there, all excepting—*that*. He was at the Andamans when I arrived, but I did not meet him for a month or more. He lived far away on the mainland—he did not go into society; and because he was silent and shabby, people thought he was an impostor, or some needy adventurer, or that he was hiding from his creditors—if not worse—so he was a kind of social outlaw."

"What! Mr. Lisle, with his thousands a year!" cried her listener in a key of angry astonishment.

"Yes; and he never undeceived any one.—I suppose he was laughing in his sleeve all the time. He told me once that he rather en-

joyed living in the Palace of Truth, and being valued for his appearance alone,—and rated according to his wardrobe, especially his hat!”

“And when did you meet him?”

“We met one evening on a kind of savage coast, where I was accidentally deserted by a pic-nic party. I was nearly mad with fright, and luckily for me, Mr. Lisle’s boat was passing, and he saw me, and took me off. On our way home we came in for an awful storm; over and over again I thought we should have been drowned, but after the most dreadful hour I ever spent, he landed me safely on Ross pier.”

“Yes!—well, that was certainly a romantic beginning. Go on.”

“Then he came and called.—Papa liked him. Yes, and so did I. He was so different to other people; he had a distinct personality of his own. He had read and travelled, and kept his eyes open. He put old things in a new light; in short, he was charming to talk to, and I was always glad whenever he came and spoke to me,—though it was not very often. At one time, he ventured over to the station tennis parties, and was quite callous

to Mrs. Creery's snubs and Lizzie Caggett's scowls. Then for weeks he would disappear."

"And all this while had he ever said anything?" inquired Dido with the authority of a girl, who had had an authenticated proposal.

"He never paid me a single compliment in his life; but I believed he liked me."

"And you liked him?"

Helen made no direct answer, but continued her tale, and her cousin accepted her silence for the proverbial consent.

"At length we had a grand ball, my first and only dance. To every one's amazement, Mr. Lisle appeared in irreproachable evening dress, and danced nearly the whole evening."

"With *you*, of course?"

"No; with a married lady, a Mrs. Durand."

"Well, I must say, that I think that was rather peculiar."

"Oh! but I found out afterwards that they had known each other as children, and been old playmates and friends. I confess I was angry, and—very, well—I suppose jealous. Afterwards I danced the last waltz with him, almost in spite of myself, and when it was over we walked up the island in the

moonlight. Dido," suddenly raising her eyes to her cousin's, "I shall never forget that night if I live to be a hundred! The look of the sea, the stillness, the fire-flies, and the moon, bright as day, casting sharp shadows of palms, and cactus plants, across our path. I shut my eyes, and I can see it *now*. Then we talked. He told me that he was going away the next day—a trip to the Nicobars. He also told me that he understood that I was going to be married to Mr. Quentin, whom you know I detest,—and offered me his congratulations! Of course I denied this indignantly, and he seemed positively not inclined to believe me at first, and then—and then—he asked me. He told me—I need not go on—Dido, *you* understand the rest!"

"And am I to understand that you said 'Yes'?"—"I believe so."

"You had no idea who he really was all the time?"

"I knew he was a gentleman, that he was well educated, and well bred; like every one else, I thought he was poor,—but that made no difference to me."

"You never dreamt that he was the

Honourable Gilbert Lisle, with about twelve thousand a year?"

"Never! He was commencing to tell me something, when Mrs. Creery swooped down upon us, and carried me off."

"Hateful old woman! And afterwards?"

"We never had an opportunity of speaking till the very last moment. He followed me towards our bungalow, and said he would come over and see papa early the next morning, before he sailed if possible. If not, to look for him in six weeks' time,—and to be sure not to forget him."

"Well?" ejaculated her listener breathlessly.

"That was nearly two years ago.—I have never seen him since."

"What?" cried Dido, jumping to her feet, and tossing her new hat passionately down on the sofa. "And you believe that *that* man was Gilbert Lisle. He was nothing of the kind! Mrs. Creery and Miss Caggett were perfectly right. He was an impostor. He and the real Mr. Lisle are as different as night from day!"

"But Mr. Lisle was in the Andamans at that time. Mrs. Durand, who was a great friend of mine, could not be mistaken—it

was she, who really told us who he was, one night at the General's. He was travelling about in search of amusement. I was a school girl, and an easy prey—and all the time he was engaged to Miss Calderwood."

"He was not, and he is not," retorted Dido, decidedly. "That is only old Mr. Redmond's pet project—and Katie has got some silly idea into her head because she saw them riding together once or twice; for that matter, so did I! She looked as cross as two sticks, and he looked bored to death; she told me once, in a burst of confidence, your know her style of being one's bosom friend one day and cutting you dead the next?"

"No, I don't" (shortly), "Miss Calderwood and I never coalesced."

"Well, she imparted to me that Mr. Lisle had a hateful temper and unsufferable manners, but that one could not expect everything! I said to myself, if *you* expect to be Mrs. Lisle, you will find yourself excessively mistaken. Mind you, I am speaking of Mr. Redmond's nephew."

"So am I."

"It is incredible that it should be him. Could there have been any misunderstand-

ing? Did you flirt with any one when he was away?"—"I? I flirt? I never did such a thing in my life!"

"Excepting with poor old Mr. Redmond; his infatuation is really pitiable," interrupted her cousin with a laugh. "Well, Helen, believe me, Gilbert Lisle never voluntarily broke his word to man or woman. There is something in the background that will be explained *yet*. I have a presentiment about it, and my presentiments are infallible."

"Do you ever have them about yourself?"

"No; excepting that I shall live and die an old maid; of course, there ought to be one in every family."

"Yes, and I reserve that post for Helen Denis! Now, never mind my humiliating experience, please tell me something more about Mr. Halliday?"

"I fancy Katie has left me but little to tell! I met him at Portrush, and there was nothing romantic about *our* first meeting; no rescue from a jungle; no hair-breadth escape—he was simply taking tea at the Reids, in the most hum-drum fashion. We used to go for expeditions along the coast and sit upon the rocks by the sea, and watch the waves,

or the moon, and talk—*you* understand the rest ! ” (smiling significantly). “ And one night, as we were walking home, he asked me to marry him—oh, Helen, I was so surprised, and so happy ! but it did not last long—”

“ Do you ever hear of him now ? ”

“ Yes, occasionally, through the Reids ; but it is all over.—We shall never meet again.”

“ Well, at least you have the consolation of knowing that he loved you, and wished to make you his wife ; there is some poor satisfaction in *that*, whilst I,” and here she broke down, and buried her face in her hands. But this emotion was merely momentary ; presently she lifted her face to her cousin, and said, “ So you see that I have had a lesson for life ; I shall never, never marry.”

“ Neither will I,” returned Dido, with much emphasis.

In the midst of these interesting confidences, and mutual assurances of celibacy, the door opened, and Biddy’s befrilled face was thrust in, recalling them sharply from romance to reality.

“ Miss Dido, will ye come out, av ye plase ! Mrs. Carmody says she’ll go to two shillin’ a hundred for them apples, and the onions sixpence a stone ! ”

CHAPTER XI.

“SALLY’S SUBSTITUTE.”

“I stood

Among them, but not of them.”

Childe Harold.

IN a large flagged room on the basement story, Helen, Katie, and old Biddy, were seated round a well-scoured table, making busy preparations for the despatch of a creditable “cart” to Terryscreen Market; neat bunches of salads, bouquets of flowers, and bundles of asparagus, testify to their industry. As far as the young ladies are concerned, their labours have been lightened by the interchange of riddles, chiefly very poor ones, and the worse they were, the more they laughed, and the more Biddy sniggered.

“I give up that one, as to what makes more noise than a pig under a gate!” said Helen, holding an exquisite bouquet of roses towards her cousin. “There is no answer. The pig could not be beaten.”

"I wish I had some more twine," she added, looking anxiously around.

"I wish you had, my dear," returned Katie, "but I can do nothing *but* wish! My hands are full. There is some in the cup on the chimney-piece in the office. No, that's *gum*; it's in Dido's desk."

The office was a little den behind the dining-room, consecrated to business, and the communings of Dido and Darby. The latter was in the act of leaving it, when Helen appeared; his face looked more foxy than usual, and there was a sly smile in his eyes as he said,—

"And what way are ye the day, Miss Denis?"

"Busy, Darby, terribly busy; I have half the asparagus to tie up yet, and not a plum picked."

"Shure 'tis nothing but divarshion for the like of yees," he rejoined contemptuously. "An I would not grudge to see you young ladies so entirely fond of flowers and garden-
ing—'Tis a nice quiet taste."

"Divarshion, indeed? There's little divarshion in picking gallons of fruit in the

blazing sun—and as to the wasps! but I'm in a hurry, Darby, I have not a moment to spare. Please let me pass," she said, now walking into the little office, where she discovered Dido seated at her brass-bound bureau, surrounded by papers, and dissolved in tears.

"What on earth is the matter?" she inquired, laying her hand on her cousin's shoulder.

"Nothing—nothing at all," hurriedly drying her eyes, and averting her face.

"Come, Dido, I am certain that you are the last girl to cry for nothing. What is it? Won't you tell me? Two heads are better than one. Is it these accounts?"

"It is just this, Helen," wheeling round with sudden energy, "I've come to the conclusion that it is hopeless to go on struggling any longer, and trying to make both ends meet; I strive, and strive, to keep out of debt—we spend next to nothing on ourselves, as you know, and when I think I am getting my head above water at last, down comes something and pushes me under, such as a big bill that I never expected, and that

nearly breaks my heart. Look at this," holding out a rather dirty scrawl, "here is one now, and Darby says it must be paid at once. And I did not even know it was owing. It's for seed-potatoes, and guano, and wire to keep out the rabbits—altogether eleven pounds," she concluded with a little sob.

"Eleven pounds!" ejaculated her cousin, taking it up and examining it.

"I notice that it is made out by Darby—does not that strike you as rather peculiar?"

"Oh, no; he always does it," returned Dido, (the unsuspecting,) pulling out a little drawer as she spoke.

"See! I have only three shillings, till after to-morrow, and these Murphys declare they can't wait any longer than Monday—they are pressed themselves, and Darby says they *must* be paid. To hear him talk, one would think I had only to go out and pick up sovereigns on the gravel!"

"Then let uncle pay," said Helen sternly, "it's not more than the price of one of his old books. I do think, Dido, that it is rather hard that you should have to work for the

support of the whole family, and that all the income from the place goes, I may say, on *air*! Barry told me that, even as it is, it brings in a thousand a year."

Dido made no immediate answer, but sat resting her chin on her hand, and gazing fixedly out of the window. At length she seemed to have come to some settled decision, for she rose and said, "I think I will try the *Padré* once more; it's rather a forlorn hope, but nothing venture, nothing have. Wait here till I come back, Helen," and with a melancholy little nod she quitted the room.

Helen sat down in her cousin's chair in front of the old bureau, with its inky baize desk, and numerous musty drawers; and noted with feelings of hot indignation, the traces of Dido's tears—tears that had splashed unchecked upon the leaves of an open account-book. Sitting here before these tear-stained columns, she asked herself dispassionately if a man who had brought forth nothing but second-hand inventions, after forty years of costly experiments, was likely to revolutionize the universe at last?

No, she had no patience with his con-

centrated selfishness, and *no* faith in the apparatus. As to Darby Chute, she had never trusted him, and although she had no solid grounds for her suspicions, yet she could not divest herself of the idea, that he was a rascal! She was aware that Darby did not eye *her* with any favour, and indeed he had more than once made craftily-veiled inquiries, as to *when* she was going away?

"It was no use," said Dido, entering the room, and shaking her head hopelessly. "I knew it. He just held up empty hands. That is his invariable answer when I beg for a little money. It will just have to be, as Darby says," sitting down, and looking at her cousin despondently, "we must sell the white cow."

"Not the one I call *my* cow; not Daisy?" cried Helen in consternation.

"Yes; she is the best of them all. She will fetch the most money. Darby thinks we might get twenty pounds for her at the fair to-morrow. There is no use in putting off the evil day, and I hate to owe a penny. I cannot sleep if I am in debt."

"You should see what some girls owe, and

how they sleep," said her cousin, thinking of the Miss Platts, and how very lightly their milliner's accounts lay on their minds. "Is there no resource but Daisy? Can you suggest nothing else?"

"Nothing, unless—" and she hesitated and coloured—"unless I borrowed the money from you, and I would not do that, for I might never be able to pay you. No; there is nothing for it but Daisy!"

"My dearest Dido," said Helen, putting her arm round her neck, "what a horribly mean wretch you must think me all this time. Don't you *know* very well, that every farthing I possess, would have been in the common purse months ago, only—only—uncle borrowed all my money the day after I came here."

"What do you say?" cried Dido, jumping to her feet. "Oh, no, Helen; oh, *surely* he did not! Oh!" in great distress, and her eyes filling with tears. "This is worse than all! This is *too* bad. Oh, my dear, foolish child, why did you let him know you had a farthing?"

"He asked me, and what could I say?"

“He has such odd ideas about money. He looks upon it as a kind of common property, and he has all kinds of queer, wild schemes about abolishing it altogether.—Was it much?” she asked anxiously.

“Never mind, Dido, how much? The loss is yours, dear; not mine. It would have been in your hands long ago, only for this.”

“Helen,” said her cousin, looking very pale, “I can speak to you, as I can to no one else—not even Katie. Papa is not like other people!”

“No,” asserted his niece with a very serious face.

“He was always eccentric; but latterly he has been getting more so.—Sometimes,” lowering her voice, and glancing nervously at the door, “he is—”

“Yes; I think I understand,” nodding her head gravely.

“Biddy guesses it; so does Barry. Katie suspects nothing, poor child. I’ve kept this to myself ever since I’ve known it,” leaning her face on her hand, and covering her eyes.

“And that was the reason that you would not listen to Mr. Halliday?”

“Yes. Mamma dreaded it, and not long

before she died she—told me—and she made me solemnly promise, to guard him as closely as possible, to keep him near me as long as he had the faintest chance," her voice dying away to a whisper.

Helen took her cousin's hand in hers, and her face was full of sympathy.

"He was only a little strange at times," continued Dido, "especially about money. But during the last year I have seen it coming, and this is one reason I've always resisted having Barry to live here, and taking over the place; this is the reason that I struggle with all my might to keep him and the Padré apart, for if he and Barry were to meet constantly, Barry would know, and Barry would immediately insist on what is only to be the last resource. I promised mama," here Dido broke down, and leaning her head against her cousin's shoulder, wept miserably.

"My poor Dido!" said Helen, smoothing her hair tenderly. "What a burthen you have had to bear all alone, and how noble, and unselfish, and patient you have been. When I think of you, and think of myself, I am bitterly ashamed! I have been latterly

entirely wrapped up in myself, and my own affairs, I never seem to give a thought to other people, and you—you have renounced your own happiness for the benefit of others—”

“I am not unhappy,” interrupted Dido, drying her eyes; “or, at any rate, I would not be, if he was getting better; but he is getting *worse*, much worse—I see it coming nearer and nearer!” and she looked up at her companion with pallid lips and startled eyes. “For days, when you do not see him, he is sitting still in the workshop, and never opens his lips. I carry him up his meals, and he takes no notice. Other times he has delusions. Not long ago, when I went up to speak to him, I found him pacing up and down the room, shouting into a long tube; he would not answer when I spoke, but at last he went and wrote on a bit of paper, ‘*Leave me, mortal, I am the trumpet of Fame!*’

“See,” searching in her bureau, “here it is! I brought it away unintentionally, and then I hid it here, I don’t know why.”

Helen gazed at this proof of her uncle’s mental aberration with startled eyes, and then she said quietly,—

"I think the time has arrived when something ought to be done. Uncle should have an experienced person to look after him, and surely *you* might manage the money."

"Yes! Barry must know at last, and Katie, and every one," said Dido, tearing up the scrap of paper with a sigh; "but to-day he is as sane as I am, and as busy as possible over the apparatus, he may not have another attack for a long time. Let us put it out of our heads. Don't think of it, we will talk of something else. I must send word to Darby this evening about Daisy; twenty pounds is the least—"

"Dido, Dido!" cried her sister, bursting into the room, "come down this moment; Sally has fallen over the step in the dairy and sprained her ankle, she is lying groaning on the settle in the kitchen, and she won't be able to stir to-morrow."

"Oh, of course!" exclaimed Dido, starting up. "Do misfortunes ever come alone?"

Half an hour later, the three girls were standing together looking blankly at their preparations for the morrow's market. There lay golden butter, cream-cheeses,

pounds of honey, bouquets of flowers, and last, but not least, their precious stock of grapes—grapes nursed through the winter, in a windy old vinery, with a tenderness they had but ill repaid.

“Is Sally’s ankle very painful?” inquired Helen, after a long pause.

“Yes; I’ve bathed it with arnica, but she won’t be able to put her foot to the ground for a week.”

“Could Andy go?”

“Andy, my dear girl, wouldn’t set foot in Terryscreen to save his life; he was in jail there! It’s just our luck, the best cart of the season! I’d take it myself, only I would be known. There would be no real disgrace in doing it—it’s ten times more shameful to owe money.”

“There’s nothing for it but to put away what will keep, and to use the rest ourselves,” said Katie, the ever practical.

After a moment’s silence, Helen said suddenly, “Look here, Dido, why should not *I* take the cart?”

“You!” shrieked her cousin. “Are you mad?”

"Now, just please to listen quietly, both of you," she returned with decision.

"In the first place, I'm a stranger to all but the Reids and Redmonds—that's one point," reckoning on her fingers. "In the second, I can get myself up in character so that you would never know me. Thirdly, I flatter myself that my brogue is undeniable. Fourthly, I've plenty of confidence. Fifthly, I mean to go."

"Helen, you are not serious?" said Dido, gravely.

"Never more so, my dear.—I know the market prices as well as yourselves. I shall dress myself up in an old garden frock and sun-bonnet, and you will see if I don't pass off as a good-looking slip of a country girl. You know very well you can't tell my brogue from Sally's in the dark, so I will be your market woman, ladies, and come home to-morrow with my pocket full of money, 'an' ye may make your minds quite aisy about me,'" suddenly adopting a brogue and dropping a curtsy. "No one will know a hate about it, barrin' the masther and meeself."

At this her cousins burst out laughing, and

finding that she was so sanguine, and so resolute, and that all their expostulations were uttered to deaf ears, they submitted to the scheme without further demur. Ofcourse Sally was taken into the secret, and when the subject was very gently broken to her by her smiling, would-be deputy, at first she held up her hands dramatically, and invoked both the local, and her own patron saints; but in the end she came round. Her thrifty soul revolted against the wanton waste of all her beautiful cheese and butter, and presently she was instructing Helen (who sat beside the settle, gravely attentive), with immense animation, and impressive authority

“You’ll find the Masther very tough to drive, miss, but he knows every stone of the road, and is acquainted with all the shops, so ye may just lave it to himself; there does be no use in prodding him, or striving to drive him, for his mouth is as hard as the heart of Pharaoh,—and he is that detarmined in his own way, that nations would not hould him! First and foremost, ye go to Clancy’s with the butter and eggs, an’ you’ll not take less than a shilling a pound, dear, and seven-

pence the dozen. She'll bate you down, seeing you are strange, and it's not Sally MacGravy she has to dale with! but just you say, 'Divil a copper less you'll take,' and let on you are going to Dooley's, accross the street. Afther that I'm thinking you will never be able to stand forenint the fruit and vegetables in the square, so ye might go over to Dooley's in *earnest* and offer him the vegetables and fruit chape; that's in *raison*, do ye mind. Then there's the grapes and flowers, I don't know what to say about them at all! They must just take their chance; it's the butter that's lying so heavy on me! With regard to the cowcumbers, and honey, and cream-cheeses, a messman does be in from barracks, a fellow with an eye like a needle in his head, and the deuce for bating you down. Then, wance in a way, ye have the officers' ladies; them's the wans for the flowers, and you'll mind to charge them double, darlin'! that's about all," concluded Sally, coming to the end of her instructions, and her breath, simultaneously.

Next morning, at grey dawn, Helen was astir and dressed; her cousins, who had hardly been able to sleep a wink with excitement,

attended her at her early breakfast, poured out her tea, buttered her toast, and surveyed her appearance with subdued giggles, and expressions of astonished delight. They assured her repeatedly, that they would pass her on the road and never recognize her. She was arrayed in a clean but faded cotton, turned up over a striped dark petticoat, a pink sun-bonnet, a white apron, and a little checked shawl. Certainly she was not quite as *like* Sally as her relations could have wished,—which, considering that Sally was bordering on forty, and weighed fourteen stone, was not surprising,—but they both emphatically declared, that she would readily pass for what she professed to be,—“a good-looking slip of a country girl, who had taken Sally’s place.”

“Too good-looking, Helen, dear,” said Dido, kissing her as she mounted the cart. “Keep your bonnet pulled well over your eyes, and try and do not show your teeth when you laugh; and above all, stick to the brogue!”

These were Dido’s final injunctions; and she escorted the cart half-way down the avenue, and then took off her shoe, and threw it after

it for luck. The last glimpse Helen caught of her favourite cousin, she was hopping along the damp drive, in quest of the said slipper.

The Master was not to be hurried.—Two hours for the five miles was his *own* time, lounging along in a leisurely way, in a series of zig-zags from ditch to ditch.

It was a lovely August morning ; the dew lay heavy on the grass, and silvery, gossamer cobwebs hung about the hedges. Helen felt her pulses beating with excitement entirely untouched by fear. A bold adventurous spirit possessed her ; there was something so utterly novel, so deliciously strange, in her present undertaking ; as if she had left Helen Denis behind, and had embodied herself in a new identity.

Presently the Master was overtaken and passed, by various carts, and even by pedestrians,—who had each, and all, a word for Sally ! But this was not Sally ! this was a black stranger, who was not disposed to waste her time in idle badinage, and who took no more notice of them than the stick in her hand, and seemed an “impident,

stuck-up piece ! ” However, it was the Crowmore mule ; there was no mistake about *him*,—once seen—never forgotten !

“ Mind that mule,” cried one, “ or he’ll break everything that’s on him, and run away with you ! ”

“ Faix, and no loss if he does ! ” retorted another.

“ Musha, an’ will ye look at the nate foot and ankle we have, hanging so aisy and so careless, over the side of the shaft ! ’Tis a lady we are, all out ! Do ye mind the gloves on her ! ”

“ Bedad, an’ if she is, she looks mighty at home on an ass’s car,” shouted a fourth.

The subject of these, and other delicate witticisms, was not sorry to find herself jogging over the cobble-stones of the High Street of Terryscreen. Greatly to her astonishment, the Master, of his own accord, rose a beautiful trot for the town, and rattled up in gallant style to Clancy’s, the butter-shop. His new driver’s heart beat unusually fast as she alighted, made the reins secure, and taking a heavy basket on her arm, proceeded to air her brogue in real earnest.

Early as it was, the place was crowded,

and she had some difficulty in edging her way to the counter, where she was at once confronted by a big, stout woman, with a merry face, and her hands on her hips, who, staring at her hard, said,—

"An' where is Sally the day?"

"She's hurt her foot," replied her substitute, in a voice that was scarcely above a whisper.

"And so you are doing her work?"

"Just for the time, Mrs. Clancy."

"From this part of the country, dear?"

"No; a good bit beyant."

"Oh, well,"—tasting the butter with her finger and glancing at her sharply—"butter is down, ye know. Elevenpence."

"Is it?" innocently. "I am not to go home with less than the shilling."

"Is that the way with you? Well, we'll say elevenpence halfpenny, honey!"

"No, Mrs. Clancy, mam, I really *dar* not do it!"

"Well, I see she has ye well schooled, and I suppose you'll just have to get it! Eighteen pounds did ye say?" now going towards the till—but being waylaid by a customer, Helen

was left to wait among the crowd for a considerable time.

Far from every eye being centred on her, as she had tremblingly feared, no one noticed her by word or glance; and her courage, which had ebbed as she entered the shop, now came back in full tide.

The Clancy's were driving a roaring trade, if one might judge by appearances. Their establishment was thronged by men in corduroy and frieze, and women in long blue cloaks, or plaid shawls, all bargaining, buying, or gossiping. She was wedged in between the counter and two stalwart matrons who were holding forth to one another with great animation. And oh, how their garments did smell of turf!

"And what way is Mary the day, Mrs. Daly?" inquired one.

"'Deed, an' I'm thinking, she is just dying on her feet; first she had a slight sketch of a cold, now 'tis a melancholy that ails her. John took her up to Rafferty's funeral, thinking to cheer her out of it, but she got a wakness standin' in the berryin'-ground, an' 'tis worse she is, instead of better."

"That's bad! An' how is Dan?"

"Oh, finely. Shure he has the pledge! Glory be to God!"

"Musha, an' I wish Pat had! Whin he comes into the town here, he gits into that much company there's no daling with him at all. Ye can't be up to them men! I thought this morning he was getting very good entirely, when I was in Fagan's store, and saw him and a couple of chaps drinking coffee. Shure, wasent it that Moody and Sanky they were at—an' wasent it half whisky?"

"Ah! now ye don't tell me that?"

"An' 'deed, an' I do! I don't say as a needleful of sperrits, ever did any wan any harm,—but there does be *some* would drink the Shannon!"

"Purviding it was potheen," supplemented her listener, dryly.

"There's your change, Alannah," called out Mrs. Clancy across the counter, "and mind ye, it will be elevenpence next week."

Helen smiled agreeably, nodded her head, and pocketed the silver. Sally would surely be able to do battle for herself by the following market-day! After a considerable

struggle she made her way out of the crowd, and once more ascended the market-cart. So far so good—the butter and eggs were off her mind—now for Dooley's, and the vegetables. But, unluckily, the Master,—who was, as we know, an animal of great strength of character,—had determined to trot off to his usual station, near the Courthouse. Of course, Helen could please herself about Dooley's, but he and the cart went to their accustomed post. The habits of years were not to be thus trifled with! This clause had not been in the bond. Helen had meant to have got rid of the fruit and vegetables (even at a sacrifice) and to have immediately afterwards set her face towards home—but to stand and sell her wares from the cart in the open market, was an ordeal that she had never anticipated. However, as she and the Master came together, together they were bound to return, and her arrangements were solely dependent on his good pleasure (a somewhat humbling reflection). For years he had been accustomed to stand for three hours per week in Terryscreen Market Square, just behind the Courthouse, and to

vary the programme to-day was an idea that never once entered his grizzled head. His lady driver, who had discovered that his mouth was all that Sally had prophesied (and more), meekly abandoned herself to her fate, and having loosened her tyrant’s bit, and administered a “lock of hay,” set to work to lay out her wares, and arrange her stall to the best of her ability. As she gazed around upon the crowd, and listened to the confused buzz of many brogues, her head failed her, her boasted confidence seemed to be oozing away at the tips of her fingers. Supposing she lost her head, supposing she was discovered? But who was to discover her? argued common sense; and if she had passed in Clancy’s shop, surely she would pass here. She was doing no harm, quite the reverse; and when she thought of Dido’s difficulties, and Dido’s tears, and those three shillings lying in her desk, and looked round on her fine stock of garden produce, capable of being turned into silver coin of the realm, she recovered herself, and by the time she had sold her first head of cabbage, her courage, and *sangfroid*, were completely restored!

CHAPTER XII.

“THE MARKET GIRL.”

“We met—’twas in a crowd.”—*Haynes Bayley*.

HELEN soon discovered that the Crowmore cart had quite an established reputation ; her peas and beans, strawberries and asparagus, commanded a brisk sale. Customers came flocking round her, and she actually ventured to retort to some of their sallies with mild replies in kind.

“Shure, we are all fighting and killing one another to dale with you !” said a sturdy old farmer, vigorously elbowing his way to the front. “Aren’t we for all the world like flies round a pot of honey ! ’Tis yourself has the jewels of eyes, avick ! But why do ye wear gloves ?”

“To keep me hands like a lady’s, to be sure,” she retorted, promptly.

“Oh ! well, as long as ye don’t cover up your face, I don’t care a thraneen ! And what are

ye asking for the white cabbage?" making an abrupt descent from blarney to business.

* * * * *

Who shall depict the emotions of Larry Flood, when lounging up to have a little idle dalliance with his sweetheart, he found himself confronted by the young English lady? Yes, the young English lady! She was busily engaged in selling three cauliflowers, and a bunch of parsley, to the priest's housekeeper, and seemed just as much at home at the trade as Sally herself. She looked up, and gave him a quick sign of warning, and when the press of business had somewhat abated, he sidled over to her, and made the following cautious inquiry in a husky whisper,—

"In the name of goodness, miss, will ye tell me if I'm in me seven sinses?"

"I believe so, Larry," she answered, with a merry smile.—"Don't betray me, for your life! Sally hurt her foot, and I offered to take her place just for to-day. I'm getting on beautifully you see; and no one is a bit the wiser."

"I could not make out what was up!" exclaimed Larry, "there's been a crowd round the cart, as if it was an execution!

'Tis only now I got next or nigh it. And signs on it! they had raison, for such a sight as yourself, has never before stood on Terryscreen Street. But I don't like it, miss, no, not for you—you are too venture-some; and if you'll allow me, miss, I'll try my hand at selling. I'm not for the road till five o'clock. I'll do my best for ye, and tell as many lies as a horse-daler, and you might just slip over into the hotel, and they'll wait on you hand and foot."

"No, thank you, Larry, though I'm very much obliged to you all the same. That would never do—never!"

"Well, I'm not aisy in me mind. It's the fair day, and supposing some of them young Bostogues come round ye, and gives ye some of their lip?"

At this disagreeable suggestion the young lady blanched visibly.

"I shall go home early,—that is to say, as soon as the mule will go," was her rather enigmatic reply.

"Early or late, do you see that window over beyant?" pointing to a ledge in a neighbouring store. "Well, I'll just take me sate

there, wid this whip, an' if I see any one offer to as much as look crooked at ye, by me sowl ! I'll bate him to a *jelly* ; and that's as sure as my name is Flood. So at any rate, miss, ye need not be anxious ! ” and having made this alarming announcement, her self-elected protector stalked away, and actually established himself in the said window-sill, where he sat sentry, with his whip in hand, and his eyes on Helen's stall, looking daggers at her customers.

The messman duly came, and purchased lavishly from the new market-girl, and did not attempt to “bate her down,” as had been predicted ; on the contrary, he paid her some very ornate compliments, and lingered so long, that Helen literally trembled lest Larry should misconstrue his civilities.

As the morning wore on, it brought some fashionable patrons, among them several ladies, who, after turning over and sniffing every separate bouquet, purchased half-a-dozen of the best. During her dealings with these Helen kept her sun-bonnet well pulled over hereyes, and commanded her countenance to the best of her ability, whilst they discussed her appearance in French, and de-

clared that she was the prettiest Irish girl they had ever seen. The fame of the beautiful market-girl must have been noised abroad, for several young men came crowding around the cart, and eagerly demanded "button-holes." For these she charged double prices without the slightest compunction. (Meanwhile Larry stood in the background armed with his whip!)

"A shilling!" exclaimed one of the customers, "oh, I say, come, you must not be getting these extravagant notions into your head, Kathleen Mavourneen, Eileen Aroon! One would think you had been in Covent Garden! I suppose you fancy that a pretty girl may charge what she pleases. Here's two shillings; one for the flowers, and the other for a good look in your charming face."

"'Deed," scornfully tossing back a shilling, "An' it's more than any one will ever ask to lay out on your honour's."

As the unhappy gentleman was unusually plain, his companions seemed to experience the keenest delight at this sally, and one of them, pressing forward, and taking up a bouquet, said,—

"How much for this, my prickly wild rose?"

"Two shillings, your honour."

"Too dear! say eighteenpence, Acushla ma cree."

"Sure the times is bad, your honour, and we must live."

"And where *do* you live, when you are at home—where do you come from?"

"Where I'm going back to," she returned, carelessly jingling her silver in her pockets.

She was making a fortune; her career so far had been one unbroken triumph, and her heart beat exultantly as she rattled her shillings and half-crowns, and complacently surveyed her almost empty cart. Carrying her glance a little above it, she met point blank the eyes of a gentleman on horseback, who was looking over the heads of her customers. He wore his hat tilted far over his brows, and was gazing at her with grave, concentrated scrutiny—the man was Gilbert Lisle. For a moment she stood as if turned to stone, then suddenly wheeling about and kneeling down, she pretended to tie her shoe-string, but her fingers trembled so ridiculously, that this was indeed a farce. She

felt a sense of choking panic; nevertheless, she was called upon to exercise all her self-command, for an officious old crone, who presided at the next stall, came over and shouted to her, saying,—

“The gentleman on the horse is spaking to you, Alannah; see here!” displaying a sovereign that had been thrown among the cabbage-leaves. “He wants a flower.”

“Tell him they are all gone,” she replied, still fiddling with her shoe-string. However, it was impossible that she could carry on this pretence much longer—and when with beating heart she at last ventured to raise her head, he was nowhere to be seen. Was it a dream? no, for there lay the piece of gold.

“It’s ould Redmond’s heir,” volunteered her neighbour, eyeing the money with greedy eyes. “He’s a great traveller, he has been away round by India, where me son is. I’ve never known him notice the likes of *you* before, and I know him man and boy. What ails ye? ye seems to have got a turn—ye look so white and wake.”

“What would ail me? nothing at all—I’m a bit tired standing so long, and I’ll just

sit down on this creel till I see me way to getting out of the throng."

"Well, you are easily bet up, I'll say that for you," muttered the other, moving back to her own stall. "One would think ye wor a lady!" It was eleven o'clock, all Helen's stock was disposed of, but for the present she saw no prospect of making her way through the crowd, and was compelled to sit, and wait, and listen to the surrounding gabble, which she did half unconsciously, for her thoughts were centred in her last customer; from which subject two tall countrymen were the first to attract her attention. They were standing so close to her that she made a kind of third party in the conversation, which proved unexpectedly interesting.

"What are you doing here, Tim?" inquired one; "sure you have nothing to sell."

"An' it's at home I ought to be! with all me barley standing; but sure I'm drawn for the jury, and bad luck to it."

"Troth, and so am I! an' I'm due in there," jerking his thumb at the Courthouse, "at twelve o'clock."

"Me hands is that full at home, I don't

know what to be at first. However," as if it was some small satisfaction, he added, "the devil a wan I'll bring in guilty."

"Nayther will I," agreed his companion, in solemn tones. "I seen Darby Chute in the day, with a few little bastes and a fine cow," (the name possessed a spell for Helen, and bound her attention at once). "I met him coming out of the bank, ere now; 'tis him has feathered his nest."

"Faix, ye may well say *feathered*," retorted the other, with a loud laugh; "he does not give the gun much time to cool!"

"Begorra, it's a shame! an ould mad man and a couple of girls—well, if poor Pat Connor was to rise out of his grave, and see the way things is going."

Just as the conversation was becoming most exciting, these two tall countrymen moved away. Not five minutes afterwards, Darby's own well-known husky squeak fell upon Helen's ear. Little did he guess who it was that was sitting with her back to him, in the pink sun-bonnet. He was accompanied by a companion, and they were evidently about to clinch some bargain.

"I'm not very swate on that Scotch whisky," said the latter, "it has not the right sort of bite in it to plase *me*! An' now Darby, me boy, what's the lowest you are going to say for the ould lady?"

"Ould lady! Holy Saint Patrick, do ye hear him? is it the young, white, short-horn cow, on her second calf?"

"I just mane the big bony cow you are striving to stick me with, for twenty-three pounds."—Helen pricked up her ears—*twenty-three pounds!*

"See here, James Casey, av I was to drop down dead this blessed minute, I won't take a half-penny less than the twenty pounds, and only I'm hard pressed for money, and times is bad, I would drive her home afore me. She'd be chape at five and twenty: a pedigree cow. An' ye know it! so ye need not be playing with me, as if I was trying to sell you an ould Kerry Stripper. Take her or lave her, you are keeping others off, and the fair is getting thin."

After ten minutes of the fiercest chaffering, and many loud invocations and denunciations on both sides, the bargain was closed

and to Helen's great joy, she saw twenty dirty one-pound notes counted into Darby's horny hand, the price of Daisy. The fair was getting "thin," as he had said, and as the clock was striking twelve, she and her empty cart emerged from the *mêlée* of pigs, sheep, and turf kishes, and waving a friendly farewell to Larry, she proceeded homewards at a brisk trot. Naturally, most of her thoughts were occupied by Gilbert Lisle, and she was consumed by a burning desire to know if he had recognized her? Had it been only amazement at a curious likeness that she had read in that glance?—a glance that revived a spirit that she thought was laid; it stirred—it recalled days of painful endurance, nights of tears. "However that is all at an end now," she assured herself, half aloud, "thank goodness, I have lived it down."

She cast one or two apologetic thoughts to Darby Chute; yes, her conscience smote her with regard to him. Darby, after all, was an honest, upright man! Hearing is believing, he had done as much to sell Daisy to good advantage,—as if she had been his own property.

CHAPTER XIII.

“BARRY’S CHALLENGE.”

“The place is haunted.”—*Hood.*

THE Master’s trot proved to be a mere flash in the pan, and after a mile the aged animal subsided into his normal pace,—namely, a desultory and erratic stroll. His driver, wearied by this monotonous crawl, alighted, and accompanied the cart on foot, walking at the mule’s head, with her sun-bonnet tilted over her face, and her thoughts miles away—say as far as Bally Redmond. Proceeding in this somewhat absent fashion, it came to pass, that in turning a corner she nearly fell into the arms of Barry Sheridan, who, taking her for what she represented at the first glance, exclaimed, “Hullo, my Beauty, ’tis yourself;” but, “The deuce!” “The devil!” were his concluding ejaculations, as he recognized the Crowmore mule, and some-

thing familiar in the cut of the market-girl's pink sun-bonnet—not to mention the face that was under it. Finding herself fairly caught, and that escape was out of the question, Helen resolved to make a virtue of necessity, and to brazen it out to the best of her ability.

“What the mischief does this mean?” he blustered, authoritatively.

“It means that Sally has hurt her foot,” she returned, with complete composure, and speaking in her natural voice, “and I have been her most successful substitute.”

“Bother your long words! Do you mean to tell me you have been selling vegetables and butter in Terryscreen?”

“I do,” she answered gaily.

“Then, not alone old Malachi, but every mother's son in Crowmore is mad. I'm blest if I ever saw anything to beat *this*,” surveying Helen, and her costume, and her flatteringly empty cart, with wrathful amazement.

“You need not be alarmed, no one recognized me, excepting Larry Flood—the cat is *still* in the bag, unless you let it out.”

“What put it into your head to go play-

acting about the country, along with the market cart? What did you do it for?"

"Merely to make money; an article that is rather scarce at the Castle. You hardly suppose that I did it for a joke, do you,—or for pleasure?"

"Well, all I can say is, that if I had anything to say to you—"

"Which you have not," she interrupted quickly.

"There you go as usual—snapping the nose off my face. I was only saying if I *had*. However, I'm glad enough to meet you in any shape—alone."

Helen glanced at him nervously, and waited to hear the sequel to this rather significant remark.

"You see, up at the Castle, you have Dido pinned to your elbow all day, and I never get a word with you."

"It seems to me that you get a good many, all the same."

"Well, not *the* word. Look here, Helen. Of course I know that you are only a teacher in a school, and have not a shilling to bless yourself with, and never will have—worse

luck; but you are a thundering pretty girl, and I am very spoony on you, so here goes. Will you marry me?"

"I?" she ejaculated with a gasp of incredulity.

"Yes; you to be sure! Who else?" approaching his arm affectionately to her waist. But a very sharp rap on the knuckles from the stick she carried in her hand caused him to change his mind.

"Come now, you don't mean *that*, I know?"

"Yes, indeed I do! please keep to your own side of the road."

"And is it to be yes? Am I not speaking to the future Mrs. Sheridan?" he inquired with an air of jaunty confidence.

"No, indeed you are not!"

"Oh, I say! you are not in earnest!" in a bantering tone. "Think it over. I'm not a bad sort of fellow. I've a snug little place. I'm old Malachi's heir. I'm quite a catch, I can tell you—you might do worse."

"Impossible!" she exclaimed scornfully.

"Do you mean to tell me you are serious; do you mean me to take no in earnest? For,

mind you, I'll not ask you *again*," speaking with angry vehemence.

"I really mean no! You may consider that the honour is declined."

"And pray, why did you encourage me, and pretend you were fond of me, eh?"

"You must be out of your senses to say so."

"Not a bit of it! You did encourage me, flirting and arguing, and making sharp speeches just to attract my notice and draw me on; why, any one could see it with half an eye!"

At this amazing statement the little remnant of the lady's temper completely gave way, and halting in the road, and turning to him with blazing eyes, she said,—

"Mr. Barry Sheridan, a few plain truths shall be spoken to you for once in your life. I would not marry you if you were a king. You are rude; you are ignorant—"

"No, I'm not," he interrupted furiously.

"Yes, you are," she continued inflexibly. "Only last night I heard you pointing out the constellation of *O'Brien's* belt! and you cannot spell two words; you are ignorant and

boorish. This may be your misfortune, not your fault; but it *is* your fault that you are selfish and overbearing, and as vain as the frog in the fable. You imagine, you poor blind ostrich," mixing her metaphors in the heat of her irritation, "that any one of the girls in the county would marry you! If you asked them, they would laugh in your face.—If you do not believe me, you can make the experiment, that's all.—You will have to improve very much indeed, before you may aspire to the hand of any *lady*, however penniless." So saying, she lightly hitched herself upon the cart, gave the mule a bang with her stick, and rattled noisily away.

* * * * *

Helen's return was hailed with acclamation; her cousins, who had long been on the look-out, met her at the gate, and escorted her to the kitchen, where she poured out her earnings and rendered a faithful account of her dealings to Sally—Sally, who cross-examined her sharply, and was transparently jealous of her success. Indeed, the only poor consolation left Miss MacGravy was, that her deputy had failed with the "sparrow-grass."

“One and sixpence, miss, I tould ye, and ye took the shilling! however, ye were clever with the cauliflowers, and on the whole, ye done well!”

“I should rather think she *had* done well!” said Dido, sweeping up the silver. “What are you going to say to them next week, Sally, when they all come asking for the smart new girl?”

“Oh, faix, it’s not many will do that, they are mostly too earnest after bargains—but if they do, I’ll just tell a good one when I go about it, and face them all down, that there was ne’er a one in it, but myself!”

“You won’t find it easy to make them believe that,” said Dido emphatically; “that would be a *good* one with a vengeance!” taking her cousin by the arm and leading her affectionately to the upper regions, where a delicate little repast awaited her.

Helen having given her relatives a modified account of her adventures (in which she dwelt on Larry’s ferocious guardianship, but skipped all mention of the two most thrilling incidents of the day, i.e. Gilbert Lisle’s unexpected appearance, and Barry’s unwel-

come proposal), was considered to have richly earned the right to enjoy an afternoon of pure and unalloyed idleness. The white blinds in the drawing-room were pulled down to keep out the sun, the sashes were up to admit a little breeze, and she lay back in a comfortable chair, watching Dido's busy fingers at work.

Presently her cousin looked up, and said, "I don't know whether it's the colour of the blinds, or what, Helen, but you look completely done up. I'm afraid that adventure this morning was too much for you!"

"Oh, no, not the least—my arms are a little stiff from driving the mule, that's all. *Tough* is no name for him!"

"Only fancy your making nearly five pounds!" laying down her work as she spoke.

"I made more than that—something which I have not shown you," putting her hand in her pocket, and holding it out, with a sovereign in her palm.

"Gold!"

"Yes. Who do you think rode up and tossed it down among the cabbage-leaves, and asked for a flower?"

"Not—*not* Mr. Lisle?"

"Yes, but it was Mr. Lisle."

"And you—did you faint?"

"Not I. I stooped and pretended to be tying my shoe the moment after I recognized him. Of course he may have been staring at me for five minutes, for all I know. No doubt he thought the market-girl had a look of his former sweetheart, and he threw her a sovereign, as a kind of little salve to his conscience," contemptuously balancing the said coin on her middle finger.

For quite two minutes Dido did not answer. There was not a sound in the room, excepting the lazy flapping of the window blind. At length she said rather reproachfully,—

"Helen, I think if I had once cared for a person, as you certainly did for Mr. Lisle, I could not speak of him so bitterly."

"I am sure you could not! But you are naturally far more amiable than I am, and your illusions have never been shattered. The last two years have hardened me. I seem to stand alone in the world. I have no protector but Helen Denis. I use my natural

weapon, my tongue, rather mercilessly ; sharp, cutting speeches seem to slip out of my mouth unawares, and they hurt no one half as much as they do me, afterwards, when I am sorry ! ”

“ I never heard you say anything sharp, until that speech about Mr. Lisle. Now that he is in the country, how will you meet him ? ”

“ Certainly not ‘ in silence and tears,’ like the individual in the song ; most probably with a smiling allusion to our former delightful acquaintance.”

“ Now, Helen, you know you won’t.”

“ No ! Well then we shall probably shake hands, and say—‘ How do you do ? What lovely weather we are having.’ That will be all.”

At this moment the door was thrown open, with a violence that shook its ancient hinges, and Katie, who had been absent ever since dinner-time, burst into the room. She was breathless with excitement, her cheeks were crimson, and there was certainly a spark of triumph in her eye.

“ Girls ! ” she gasped, “ what do you think

has happened? No, I’m not going to let you guess, because I can’t keep it another second, —Barry has asked me to marry him!”

An awful pause ensued, and then Dido said, in a sharp voice, “And of course you said no!”

“And of course I said yes! Only imagine my having a proposal before *you*, Helen!” darting an exultant look at her pretty, pale cousin, who now suddenly unclasped her hands from behind her head, and sat up erect, and looked at her with eyes wide with horrified surprise.

Vanity is one of those curious elements in human nature which defy every rule, and impel the victim into the most unexpected courses. Barry had been put upon his mettle, and he was resolved to show Miss Denis her mistake at any cost. Accordingly he offered himself to the very first young lady he met, who happened to be her cousin, Katie, and here, within four hours of Helen’s scornful rejection of his hand, he was engaged to a girl under the same roof as herself! The long exciting day, the unexpected encounter with Gilbert, Barry’s proposal, and Barry’s

revenge, were too much for her over-wrought nerves ; to the horror of Dido, and the amazement of Katie, their cousin received the news—and she, who had always been so *down* on Barry—in a storm of hysterical tears !

* * * * *

The next day brought the successful suitor to Crowmore to receive the congratulations of his friends ; his attitude was one of sulky triumph as he nodded his acknowledgments of Dido's tepid felicitations, and Biddy's brief greeting—Biddy, who had more than once imparted to the bride elect that “she would not grudge Mr. Barry a good baiting, to take the concate out of him !”—For once he obtained an interview with his uncle, and then he sought Helen,—but at first she was nowhere to be seen ! All the afternoon she had been digging dandelion roots out of the gravel, with a kitchen knife, a weary, exasperating performance, and now, with an aching back, she was enjoying well-earned repose under a beech-tree on the lawn. She had scarcely begun to realize the delights of this exquisite August evening, scarcely turned a page of her book, when, to her great disgust,

she heard a loud "ahem," and, looking up, beheld Barry—Barry, gazing at her with angry, vindictive eyes ! His recent penchant had been speedily replaced by a good, sound, substantial hatred, which he was at no pains to keep out of his countenance. Helen raised her head and looked at him, and beheld defiance in his port, and triumph in his glance. No rebuff, no rejection, could quench the unquenchable.

"So you see you were wrong!" he sneered; "who is the ostrich now—who is the frog, eh? I wonder you are not above calling people names!"

"Go away, and don't dare to speak to me, sir!"

"But I will speak to you!" he retorted defiantly. "You see, with *all* your fine talk, the very first girl I asked took me, and was glad of the chance!"

Helen merely lifted her eyes again and looked at him with frank disgust.

"I'm going to live here; the old fellow agrees. Katie is his favourite daughter, and, any way, it is high time to take the money out of his hands, and that there was some sane

person over the property ! I shall give Darby Chute the sack," he grinned at Helen, and she read in his eyes that she would undoubtedly "get the sack" also.

"Of course you'll say nothing to them about yesterday," dropping his tone of authority for one of querulous entreaty, as his eyes fell on Dido and Katie, hurrying across the lawn. "You keep what I said to you to yourself?"

"Need you ask?" she returned scornfully.

"Come away from under the tree, and sit upon these shawls!" cried Katie. "That bench is so unsociable. Here," spreading it as she spoke, "is one for you and me, Barry, and you may smoke, to keep away the midges."

"I don't want *your* leave to do that," was the gallant reply as he flung himself heavily at the feet of his lady love, and commenced to blow clouds of tobacco into the air. Presently he said, "How much did the cow fetch, Dido?"

"Only sixteen pounds—I'm so disappointed; but Darby said he was glad to get it, as there were no buyers of dairy stock—only shippers—"

"Sixteen pounds!" echoed Helen. "Are you sure?"

"As sure as any one *can* be, who has the money in their pocket. Darby brought it up this afternoon."

"Then, Dido, Darby has robbed you—robbed you shamefully! I overheard him sell the cow yesterday, and I meant to have told you, but other things put it out of my head; he sold her for twenty pounds—no wonder people say he has feathered his nest!"

"Oh, Helen," cried Dido, in dismay, "what is this you are telling me?"

"Just what I've been telling you for the last year, and you would not listen to me," said Barry in a loud voice. "I always knew he robbed you out of the face!"

It does not often happen that twice within twenty-four hours, a man's predictions are fulfilled to the letter—Barry's star was undoubtedly in the ascendant, he literally swelled with triumph.

"I saw the money counted into his hand," continued Darby's accuser; "twenty one-pound notes, and I thought how pleased you would be, and—he kept back four!"

“I’ve a great mind to go down to him this very evening, and impeach him to his face. I suppose he has been doing this all along. No *wonder* I can’t make both ends meet!”

“Don’t go to-night,” said Katie gravely, “wait till to-morrow. I hear John Dillon is about again—he shot the Crowmore grouse bog yesterday.”

“I always knew that he was nothing but a poacher. Why don’t some of the people try and catch him!” inquired Helen calmly.

“But it *is* John Dillon—exactly as he was in the flesh—he has been seen scores of times! Why, you saw him yourself, Barry; *you* have met him?” said Katie, appealing to her lover, with judicious docility.

“Yes! and I would not meet him again for a million of money. Catch him, indeed! that’s a good joke! You know the man that was found last winter drowned in a bog hole; they say he was seen struggling with a big black figure on the brink, and that it was John Dillon put him in, and no less!”

“I don’t believe in Dillon’s ghost—a ghost that shoots and smokes!” retorted Helen scornfully.

"I tell you what, Miss Helen Denis, it is all very fine for you to say, you don't believe this, and you don't believe that—talking is easy. I'd have some respect for your opinion, if you will start off now, alone, and walk to the black gate and back—this," glancing up at the sky, "is just about his time."

"Do leave her alone, Barry," exclaimed Dido irritably, "why are you two always wrangling with each other. Helen, you are not to think of going."

"Yes!" returned her cousin, rising, "I should like a walk. I'll go, if it is only to prove to you and Katie, that I have more courage in my little finger, than other people have in their whole body."

"Do you mean that for me?" demanded Barry fiercely, rising on his elbow as he spoke.

"If the cap fits, wear it, by all means!" You said a moment ago, that you would not face Dillon for a million. I don't care a fig for Dillon,—and I am going to meet him now!"

More than this, she was eager to seize the excuse to have a nice long stroll through

the woods by herself, in order that she might arrange her ideas, and meditate at leisure—for, thanks to her affectionate cousins, she rarely had a moment alone.

“Do you think you will catch him, or will he catch you?” inquired Barry rudely.

To this she made no reply, and, resisting Katie’s eager, almost tearful entreaties, she snatched up a shawl, and sped away across the grass; and, as she did so, Barry shouted after her,—

“Mind you carve your name on the gate, to prove you go there *at all!*”

CHAPTER XIV.

"THE POACHER'S GHOST."

"But I am constant as the Northern Star."

It was not dark, it was not even dusk, when Helen, having fought her way through the laurustinus and syringa of the pleasure-grounds, mounted the hill which lay between Crowmore and Bally Redmond. Here she paused on the summit, and looked back. What a change even two days can make in one's whole existence! Two evenings previously she had been picking mushrooms on this very hill in her ordinary, tranquil frame of mind; now, glancing down on the old Castle, Crowmore was to have a new master, and she must leave its shelter! Her annual pittance would soon be due, and she would thus be enabled to return to her duties, at Malvern House. Well, she had never intended to quarter herself altogether on her cousins! With a half-stifled sigh she turned her face

towards Bally Redmond, whose gables and chimneys peeped above the trees. And so Gilbert Lisle was under that roof—probably at dinner at that moment, sitting opposite to Miss Calderwood ! “ Of *course* he is engaged to her,” she said aloud ; “ Dido only denied it because the wish was father to the thought ! I dare say they will be married soon ; perhaps before I leave. Well, I think I shall be able to decorate the church, and even to accept an invitation to the wedding—if I get one ! ”

These thoughts brought her to the notorious gate, which separated the two estates. It led from the hill-side pasture of Crowmore straight into the dense woods of Bally Redmond, and was at present fastened by a stout padlock. There was no sign of John Dillon ; no sound to be heard, save the cawing of rooks and the cooing of wood-pigeons ; and, without a moment’s delay, Helen dived into her pocket, produced a small penknife, and commenced to carve her initials with somewhat suspicious haste. She was not the least afraid of ghosts ; her solution of the great “ apparatus ” scare had effectually ban-

ished all such fears; but it was a silent, lonely place, where she had no desire to linger.

The wood she was operating upon was hard, the penknife brittle, and the process slow. She had only achieved the letter H, when her ears, being quickened by an almost unconscious apprehension, caught the tread of a footstep coming through the plantation. Nearer and nearer it approached; now it was walking over leaves, which deadened the sound; now it stepped upon a rotten twig, which snapped. Her heart, despite her bravery, commenced to flutter wildly. Was this the poacher’s ghost? she would know in another second; in another second the branches were thrust aside by a grey tweed arm, and she beheld, not John Dillon,—but Gilbert Lisle! and she felt that the sharpest crisis of her life was at hand.

He stopped for an instant, as though to collect himself, then came straight up to the gate and doffed his cap. He looked grave, and extremely pale; and after a perceptible pause, he said,—“Miss Denis, I am very glad to meet you again.”

In answer to this she merely inclined her

head. At this supreme moment she could not have spoken to save her life.

"I see that the pleasure is entirely on my side; and, naturally, you believe me to be the most faithless, perfidious--"

"The past is past," she interrupted in a low hurried voice. "Let us agree to forget that we have ever met before. I was a silly schoolgirl; you were a traveller—a man of the world, seeking to enlarge your experience of places and people. You experimented on *me*. It was rather cruel, you know, but it does not matter now. We do not live in the age of broken hearts!"

"Miss Denis!" he returned passionately, "I'd rather a man had struck me across the mouth than be obliged to stand and listen to such words from a woman! And the worst of it all is, that your taunts seem well deserved. You do not know the *truth*. Look here," hastily producing a letter addressed to herself, "I was on my way to leave this for you with my own hands. I did not venture to expect that you would see me; but since I have so happily met you, will you listen to me?"

"No, Mr. Lisle," she answered coldly, "I am not a school girl *now*."

"Pardon me, but you must—you shall—hear me," suddenly closing his hand on her wrist with a vice-like grasp, and speaking with unusual vehemence.

"Of course I must hear you, if you choose to detain me against my will! Would you keep me here by such means?" she asked, her voice trembling with indignation.

"I would! Yes, brutal as it sounds, I *would*. Every criminal has a right to be heard; and from you, in whose eyes I appear a miserable traitor, I claim that privilege. I will no longer suffer you to think me a base, false-hearted cur! There," suddenly liberating her hand as he spoke, "There, I release you, but I appeal to your sense of honour, and justice, to give me a hearing!"

Helen made no reply, but, as she did not move, he naturally took silence for consent, and, without a moment's delay, began to plead his cause in rapid, broken sentences.

"Do you know, that for the last ten days I have been searching for you everywhere, and that I have been half distracted!—At first I

addressed myself to your aunt, who curtly refused your address, and made some sceptical remarks on my motives in seeking you ; then I travelled down to Tenby, and interviewed Mrs. Kane,—unfortunately, she had lost your last letter, and could only remember that your post town began with a T,—which was rather vague. Next I telegraphed out to Mrs. Home—who replied with ‘Malvern House.’ Finally Mrs. Platt was induced to believe that I was in *earnest* ! She sent a line to Mrs. Durand ; Mrs. Durand forwarded it to me instantly. I started for Ireland within half an hour, and here I am ! ”

“ But why ? ” inquired the young lady frigidly.

“ Simply because, until the last fortnight, I believed you to be the wife of James Quentin ! Yes, you may well look indignant and scornful ; I richly deserve such looks. You shall judge me, you alone—Here,” suddenly removing his cap, and laying his hand on the gate. “ I stand as it were at the bar before you. Be patient with me for a few minutes ; hear my defence, and then you shall say if I am guilty or not guilty.—I

leave my cause, my fate, my future life in your hands ! "

Helen listened to his appeal in profound silence ; poignant memories, maidenly pride, trembling expectation, struggled fiercely in her breast. In the end her heart proved to be her suitor's most eloquent advocate, and with a hasty gesture of assent, she motioned to him to go on.

" You remember that night at Port Blair, when we parted, as I hoped but for a few hours ? Well, I went home and waited up for Quentin, and talked to him in a way that astonished him. Nevertheless, he stuck to his point, and blustered, and stormed, and swore that you *were* engaged to him."

" And you believed him ? " she exclaimed, with repressed emphasis.

" I did not believe his words. What converted me was his facts—the fact that he possessed the wreck ring, and placed it in my hand. That was sufficient. I thought, when you could give *him* that,—you could not care for *me*."

" And from first to last you were Mr. Quentin's cat's-paw ? "

“His cat’s-paw, his tool, his fool; whatever you like!” vehemently. “I was an infatuated idiot. I mistook him for a gentleman, and measured him by a wrong standard. He told me lies by the dozen, and when I left the Nicobars I was under the impression that he was about to return to Port Blair, and to marry you at once. I went to Singapore, to Japan, to California; I rambled about the world, quite beyond reach of news from the Andamans. Indeed, news from the Andamans I never sought—*that* page in my life was closed. I came to London about three weeks ago, and almost the first people I met were Quentin and his wife! After that, Mrs. Durand cleared up the whole business.—She told me how your ring had been stolen, and she it was, who succeeded in wringing your address from your aunt, and that’s about the whole story!”

“What did Mr. Quentin mean?” inquired Helen gravely.

“It’s hard to say. He is a notorious lady killer. He did not like to be cut out. He was going away, and was utterly reckless. I believe he had a comfortable conviction that

he could commit any social enormity in those out-of-the-way islands with the utmost impunity. He believed that when he sailed away, he put himself beyond the reach of all reprisals. And now, Helen, what do *you* say? If you only knew what I have felt the last fortnight, you would think that I've been pretty well punished for being Quentin's dupe! Am I guilty or not guilty? Can you ever forgive me?"

"Yes; I do forgive you," she replied at length, with a little catch in her breath.

"And we will go back to where we left off that evening at Port Blair," suddenly leaning his arms on the gate, and looking at her earnestly.

To this she shook her head in silence.

"There is some one else?" he said, in a low voice.

"No, there is no one else," she answered, without looking up.

"Then you are really implacable; and, indeed, I cannot wonder."

"I am not implacable," and she laughed a little nervous laugh; "but I am a governess!"

“And what in the world has that to do with it?”

“Everything. I am not a suitable wife for a great landed proprietor like you. You took us all in at Port Blair; but now I know who you really are, it would never do. I am a lady, certainly—your wife can be no more than that—but I have no money, no connections.”

“I don’t understand you,” he said, rather stiffly.

“Ask your friends, ask your father, your uncle, *they* will explain it all very forcibly.”

“That is a miserable excuse, and will not serve you. My father has been goading me towards the yoke of matrimony for years. My worthy uncle, little knowing, talked of you all lunch-time, to-day, and wished himself a young man for your sake—not that if he were—you would listen to him, I *hope*!”

“I am not going to listen to any one.”

“Yes, you are, you are going to listen to ME. When I was a poor obscure nobody at Port Blair, you accepted me as your future husband—you know you did.”

“Yes; and now that I’m a poor obscure

nobody at Crowmore, you wish to return the compliment.”

“Helen!” he exclaimed, in a tone of sharp reproach, “you don’t believe in your heart that I set any value on my money, or my birth. I want you to take me for myself alone, as if you were a dairy-maid, and I was a blacksmith. Will you?” extending his hand.

“But if I say yes, what will become of Miss Calderwood?” she inquired, ignoring the proffered clasp.

“Miss Calderwood is nothing to me, I am nothing to her; our estates suit one another, that’s all. You don’t suppose that I care a straw for Miss Calderwood, or she for me?” coming close to her as the gate would permit, and looking at her fixedly. “You know very well that I care for no one but *you*; don’t you, Helen?”

Helen raised her eyes, and looked at him, —and believed him.

“I’m afraid you have had a very rough time of it since we parted—both at Port Blair, and in London?—I hate to think of it.”

“Yes. I was miserable at first, most miser-

able," her eyes filling. "Afterwards I got on better, and I've been very happy here."

"But, my dearest Helen—" (N.B. from Miss Denis to Helen, from Helen to my dearest Helen, had been a rapid transition)—
"Is not your uncle very"—mad, he was going to say, but changed it to the word—"odd?"

"Very, very odd; indeed, more than odd, poor man, but he was very good to me. I am fond of my cousins, especially Dido. Katie is going to marry her cousin Barry."

"Unhappy Katie!" in a tone of profound commiseration. "Tell me, Helen, has that ill-conditioned Orson ever dared to make love to you?"

"Never mind—I detest him—in fact, it is to prove that he is a coward, that I am here now. He defied me to come up here, and cut my name on this gate. See, I have got as far as H."

"I see! and it is hardly worth your while to add the D," he added, significantly. "Before very long you will have another initial. And why did Mr. Barry Sheridan defy you to cut your monogram on this gate?"

"Because it is said to be haunted by

Dillon's ghost! No one ventures here after dusk."

"Indeed! Do you know, that I came across *your* ghost in Terryscreen yesterday; a market girl, who is your double. When I saw her I felt that it was a good omen, that you and I would be face to face ere long."

"Yes, and you were kind enough to toss her a sovereign—here it is," now producing it; "it has been burning a hole in my pocket ever since. Yes," in answer to his stare of incredulity, "I may as well confess to you at once, that it was not my double that you saw, but myself. You may well look amazed. Did I not play my part to perfection?"

"Inimitably—but why?"

"We," with a backward wave of her hand, "are miserably poor! Uncle's inventions absorb all the money, Darby, the steward, is a thief, and Dido has nothing to look to but the garden; every week she sends a cart to market, and it is the mainstay of the housekeeping. Sally, the dairy-maid, was laid up—I took her place."

"And when did you pick up the brogue and the blarney?"

“Oh, that was the easiest part of the matter ! I can take off anything.”

“*You* can ?” rather startled.

“Yes, ever since I could speak ; but I never attempted it in earnest till yesterday. Please take back your sovereign,” holding it out.

“What am I to do with it ? Fasten it to my watch-chain as a memento of the day my wife sold vegetables in the market square at Terryscreen ?”

“If I were you, I would not talk of your wife before you have one,” returned the young lady, blushing crimson. “I think you might give it in charity.”

“So be it !” obediently placing it in his waistcoat pocket. “After all, I’m glad that you and the flower-seller were identical. I always thought you were the prettiest girl in the world, and it gave me quite an unpleasant shock to see your counterpart.”

(After this speech it was no longer in Helen’s power, to say that Mr. Lisle had never paid her a compliment.)

“And who have we here, coming down the hill with a brace of rabbits over his

shoulders, and a gun under his arm?" he asked abruptly.

Helen glanced behind her, and beheld a man approaching with a black beard and peaked cap, and shrank closer to her companion instinctively, as she answered,—

"It must be John Dillon!"

And it was. The seemingly solitary white figure offered a peculiarly tempting opportunity to the ghost, and he advanced with long and rapid strides, (not being aware of the presence of a third party, who was at the other side of the gate and somewhat in the shade.) He was within three yards of Helen, and had already stretched out a threatening arm, when,—

"Hullo, John!" in a masculine voice, caused him to pause and recoil a step or two. "I say, you seem to have had good sport?"

John glowered, backed, and would have fled, but Gilbert was too quick for him. He vaulted over the gate, and said,—

"Come here, my friend, and give an account of yourself. It's not every day that I see a ghost! Let me have a look at you!"

Very slowly, and reluctantly the spectre slouched back, and stood within a few feet of his questioner. Flight was useless ; he had to deal with a man of half his age, and thrice his activity.—Moreover, his gun was not loaded.

“And so I hear that you made a capital bag on our bog on the eleventh, John ; what do you do with your game ? You know you have no game licence and are a terrible poacher ; woodcock, pheasants, hares, all come handy to you. My uncle tells me that three hundred head of his long tails were sent away to Dublin and sold last winter, and this in spite of watchers at night, and every precaution ; you won’t leave a head of game in the county ! Now, I don’t mind betting a sovereign that you have a brace of grouse in one of your pockets.”

Here John, who had hitherto simply stood and glowered, showed signs of moving off, but his captor took him firmly by the arm, and leading him out beyond the shadow of the trees, said,—

“Mr. Darby Chute, if I’m not greatly mistaken ! I’ve suspected you for years. Just take off your cap, will you ? Now your beard,

if you please ? " And, sure enough, there stood Darby.

For some seconds there was an eloquent silence, broken at last by Helen who, notwithstanding her scepticism of Mr. Chute, was unprepared for *this* dénoûment.

"Oh, Darby, how COULD you ? " she exclaimed with horror.

"Mr. Gilbert," he stammered in a tremulous voice, "I've known ye, man and boy, and ever since ye wor a terror with a catapult. 'Twas I first taught you to handle ferrets, and sure you would not go and expose me now ? "

"Why should I not ? You have poached this estate for the last ten years ; not modestly now and then, like your neighbours, but as systematically as if you had leased the shooting. You must have made your fortune."

"Fortune, indeed ! an' how would I make a fortune ? " indignantly.

"Easily, Darby ! what about the white cow you sold for Miss Dido for twenty pounds, and you only gave her sixteen ? " demanded Helen authoritatively.

"Arrah ! what are you talking about,

Miss?" he asked with an air of virtuous repudiation. "Do ye want to destroy mee character?"

"It is all right, Darby, *I* was there. I heard you sell it to a man named James Casey. We will send for him to-morrow if you like."

"Faix, I see I may as well make a clean breast of it;—I see that it's all over," remarked Darby with sullen self-possession.

"If you mean the shooting of the best covers in the county, and robbing old Mr. Sheridan, I think you are about right, and that it *is* all over," returned Gilbert emphatically.

"Well, sure, if *I* did not take from him, some one else would," was the cool rejoinder. "'Tis a shame for the likes of him, to be tempting poor people!"

"I suppose it was your shots that we used to hear in the woods?"

"I expect it was, Mr. Gilbert."

"And it was you who terrified the wits out of every one after dark—more especially other poachers. That was a clever dodge."

"It was not too bad, Mr. Gilbert.—Some people does be very wake in themselves, and shy at night."

"And there are not half enough knaves in the world, for the fools that are in it! You are a most infernal rascal."

"May be I am, Mr. Gilbert; but I never went again me conscience."

"You could not well go against what you have not got."

"And, sure, what is game but wild birds?"

"And the cow, was she a wild bird?—I suppose you sent all your bags to Dublin?"

"Faix, an' I did, Mr. Gilbert!" returned Darby with perfect equanimity.

"And who bought your spoil?"

"Oh, a spalpeen in William Street, a rale chate! he never gave me more ner two shillings a brace. Don't *you* have no dalings with him," said the culprit with heroic impudence.

"And now, what am I to do with you, Mr. Chute? You are convicted here as a thief and poacher, on your own confession."

"Well, now, since you *ax* me, I think ye might as well let me off, Mr. Gilbert! Sure, it won't be no pleasure, or relief, to you to prosecute me, and me old mother would think bad of me going to jail. Won't you spake a word for me, Miss Helen? Sure, there's

no one but yourself can say a hate against me, and ye would not like to be put up in the witness-box at Terryscreen.

“You need not be distressed about Miss Denis, Darby,” said Gilbert sternly. “I could prove enough without her. If I do let you off, it will be on account of your old mother, and because I’ve known you since ever I could walk, and because the harm is donenow, and to publish your knavery, would make half the county look like fools.”

“Look here, Mr. Gilbert, I’ll never offer to fire a shot in anyone’s ground again, nor to set foot in Crowmore. And I’ll make restitution on the cow, an’ wan or two small matters besides, in all twinty pounds. There now ! I’m laying me sins bare before you—and what more can I do ?”

“You can leave the country ! You must clear out within twenty-four hours, and never show your face again in these parts, either as John Dillon or Darby Chute. And, as to the restitution, I shall have a word with Father Fagan, *he* will see to that.”

“Very well, Mr. Gilbert,” he rejoined quietly, “as you plase. But I warn you that

would just destroy both you and me. Howd-somever, I've a brother in America, and I've long laid out to go there. So it's not putting me much about!"

"And is less inconvenient than jail! Well, I daresay you will be smart enough even for some of them."

"Shure, how would I be smart, that never had no book learning?" protested Darby scornfully. "Look here, Mr. Gilbert, if that's your young lady—and, faix, it *looks* like it—I never saw any one make a worse hand of coortin' than yourself. Raally, I'm surprised at ye! You at one side of the gate, and her at the other. Miss Helen," now turning to her, "I suppose ye may as well have this brace of grouse," producing the birds from his pocket. "And with regard to that little account you were spakin' of, and the *other* change, I'll send it up the first thing in the morning, and may be you won't let on, but it was a mistake."

"Indeed, Darby, I shall tell the whole truth," cried Helen indignantly. "You need not expect *me* to keep such a thing secret."

"Well, I'll be out of it to-morrow! so it's

no great matter. Good-bye, Mr. Gilbert; good-bye, Miss Helen, you and I were never very thick, still I wish you both luck and grace, and that you may live long and die happy," and picking up his cap and gun, Mr. Darby Chute walked away with considerable dignity.

"There's a nice ruffian for you!" exclaimed Gilbert emphatically.

"Yes; and to think how he must have robbed uncle! and poor Dido!"

"And to think of the years, he has been poaching the country! However, never mind him now, we have something else to talk about."

"But there's the stable clock striking eight, and I must go.—And it's your dinner hour at Bally Redmond."

"Not to-night.—To-night I don't want any dinner." (Could manly devotion go farther?) "I am going to walk back with you. Thank goodness, there is no Mrs. Creery to hustle me away *this* time."

To his proposal the young lady made no demur, no protestations; not even when he insisted on taking her home by the longest way, up the hill, out by the road, and in by the new avenue! The whole distance was

about three quarters of a mile; the time occupied three quarters of an hour; the moon, a full harvest moon, had risen, and the twilight had given place to a light almost as clear as day. Seated on her own doorstep, smoking her little dhudeen, they descried the “Fancy,”—and she saw them! The unexpected appearance of an interesting-looking young couple strolling down the road, was a welcome windfall to this active old woman, who instantly sprang up, and darted out, to waylay them with her invariable whine of,—

“Give the poor old woman the price of a cup of tay, your honour. Oh!” recognizing him, “and ’tis yourself is welcome home, me own darling Mr. Gilbert. Give me the price of a new petticoat, and that you may *gain the lady!*”

In answer to this romantic appeal, he promptly threw her the sovereign that Helen had returned, and Judy (having made herself acquainted with the value of the coin) accompanied the lovers to the gates, overpouring them the while with shrill benedictions.

From the following few words, it would

appear as if the "Fancy's" good wishes were wholly superfluous, and that the lady had already surrendered.

"Good-night," she said as she paused half way up the avenue. "You really must not come any further."

"And pray why not?"

"Because they know nothing, and it will look so strange," she stammered. "I should like to tell them first," she added rather shyly.

"Then I shall come over at cock-crow, to-morrow. May I come to breakfast?"

"Yes, you may. Good-night," holding out her hand.

"Good-night! and is that all? I am not going to let you run off like that, *this* time!" detaining her. "You have forgotten something."

"Oh, of course! How stupid of me—the grouse to be sure!"

"No—NOT the grouse!" replied Gilbert—who was far bolder than Darby imagined!

Two minutes later Helen's cousins,—who had been sitting with the drawing-room door open, and the hall door as usual, eagerly

listening to every sound,—heard her running up the gravel, and then up the steps. Her cheeks were scarlet, but on the whole, she did not look as if she was flying from a ghost!

"What a fright you have given us!" cried Dido rushing at her. "Katie and I have been almost distracted.—You have been away nearly two hours."

"Have I really!" she exclaimed apologetically. "I did not think I had been half that time."

The anxieties of her relatives had evidently not been shared by Barry, who sat with his feet upon a chair, a paper in his hand, and a look of stolid indifference on his face.

"Well, did you see Dillon?" he demanded as she entered the drawing-room.

"Oh, yes! I saw him," she returned carelessly; "and here are a brace of grouse he gave me!" exhibiting the birds.

"I don't believe you!" bringing down his boots with a loud bang.

"And there's his beard!" tossing a black object into Katie's lap,—who immediately rose with a loud shriek, and shook it off as if it had been a rattlesnake.

“I’ll tell you something else,”—addressing herself specially to her cousins. “What do you think? We made a grand discovery this evening. John Dillon, the notorious ghost poacher, is your esteemed friend, Darby Chute!”

When the ensuing storm of exclamations and questions, had somewhat subsided, Dido said suddenly, “But surely he never confessed all this to you alone? Who was with you? What do you mean by *we*?”

Helen’s sole answer was a brilliant blush; and, strange to say, this reply was sufficient for her cousin.

* * * * *

A year has elapsed since Gilbert Lisle stood on his trial at the black gate. He has now quite settled down in the rôle of a married man, and spends most of his time between Berkshire and Bally Redmond. However, his wings have not been *too* closely clipped, for people who bore a striking resemblance to him and his wife, were met in Tangiers last winter: and they are meditating a trip to the East, and paying a flying visit to Dido, who is now residing on the plains of Hindo-

stan, and learning the practical use of punkahs and mosquito nets.

Thanks to Helen's good offices, the course of Miss Sheridan's true love ran smoothly after all, and she was married with considerable *éclat* from the Lises' house in London. Between that mansion and 15, Upper Cream Street,—there is a cloud. Helen and her relatives exchange dignified salutes when they meet in public, but there their intimacy ceases. Mr. Lisle has forbidden his wife to cross her aunt's threshold (an embargo that is by no means irksome to that young lady), and the Misses Platt tell all their acquaintance what an odious, ungrateful creature she is, and how once upon a time they took her in, and kept her out of charity. And *this* is their reward!

Nevertheless, the Honourable Mrs. Gilbert Lisle does not forget old friends. She is not ashamed to see the Smithson Villa vehicle standing before her door; and she has more than once visited at Malvern House, and entertained Mrs. Kane, and some of her former pupils. Lord Lingard has been altogether captivated by his daughter-in-law.

She is everything his heart desires; young, pretty, and pleasant.—He has invested her with the family diamonds!

Barry and Katie reign at Crowmore. The place is much altered, for the better; the old lodges have been swept away, the wall is gone, the gates restored; the garden is pruned, the yard is reclaimed, and the out-offices are roofed, and filled. Katie is happy in her own way.—She rather enjoys being bullied by Barry, is lenient to his little foibles, and she listens to his vainglorious personal reminiscences, with deep interest, and implicit faith. On one point alone she is somewhat sceptical, viz., that Barry could have married her cousin, had he chosen,—her pretty cousin Helen, who occasionally drives over from Bally Redmond in a smart Stanhope phaeton, and seems perfectly satisfied with her own husband, and who snubs Barry, as mercilessly as ever!

Mr. Sheridan, poor gentleman, has now but few lucid intervals. He is at present engaged in an absorbing search for the elixir of life, and lives in his tower along with a companion,—whom he treats with the most

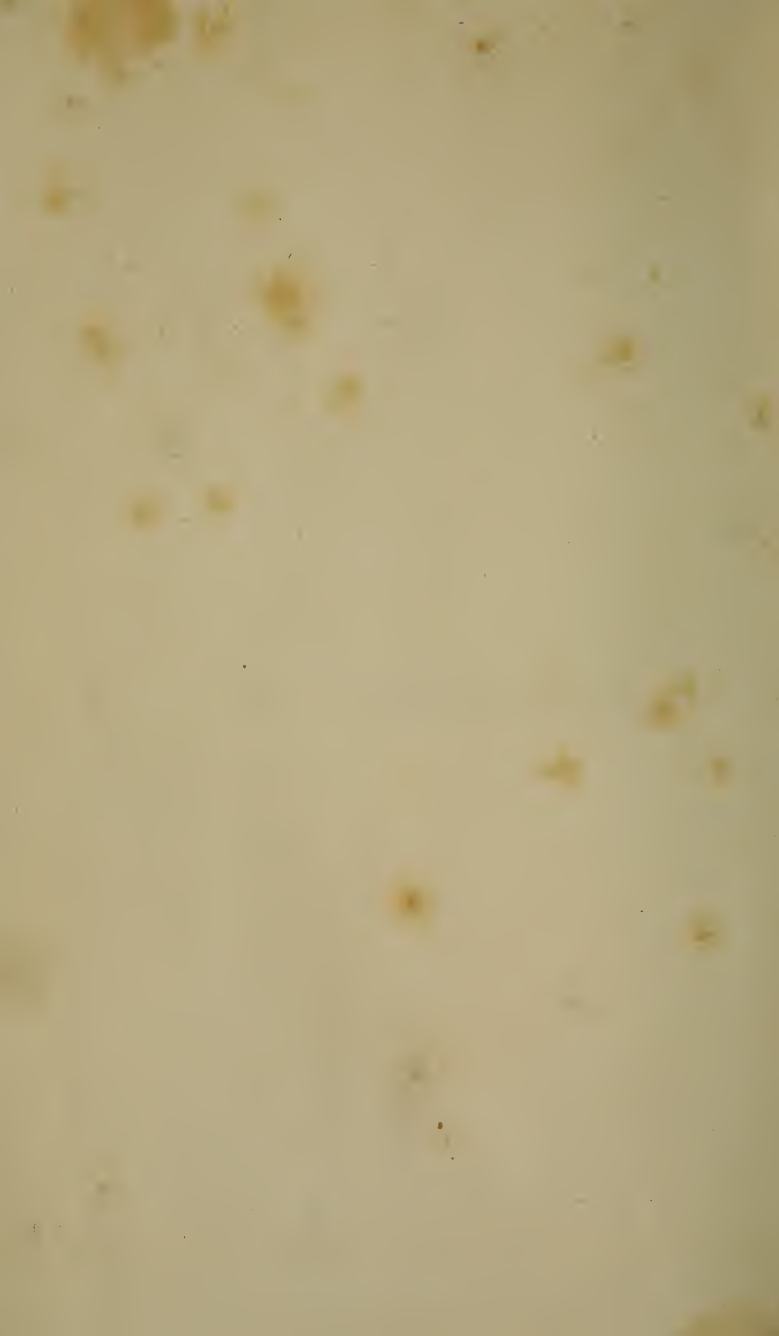
reverent respect and calls “Archimedes,” but to the outer world, he is known as James Karney—a keeper from a lunatic asylum.

Biddy, thanks to Helen’s good offices, has relented at last, and permitted her niece Sally to bestow her capable hand upon “that little sleveen, Larry Flood.” The market cart has consequently been abolished, and the Master’s occupation (like Othello’s), is gone. He is now a pensioner at Bally Redmond, where, to quote his late charioteer, Mrs. Flood, “he never does a hand’s turn, barrin’ thievin’ in the haggard, and chasing the cows.”

The “Fancy” continues to flourish, to levy tribute, and to make a comfortable income out of her holding at the Cross. And, according to the last accounts from America, Darby Chute reported himself to be doing *well*.

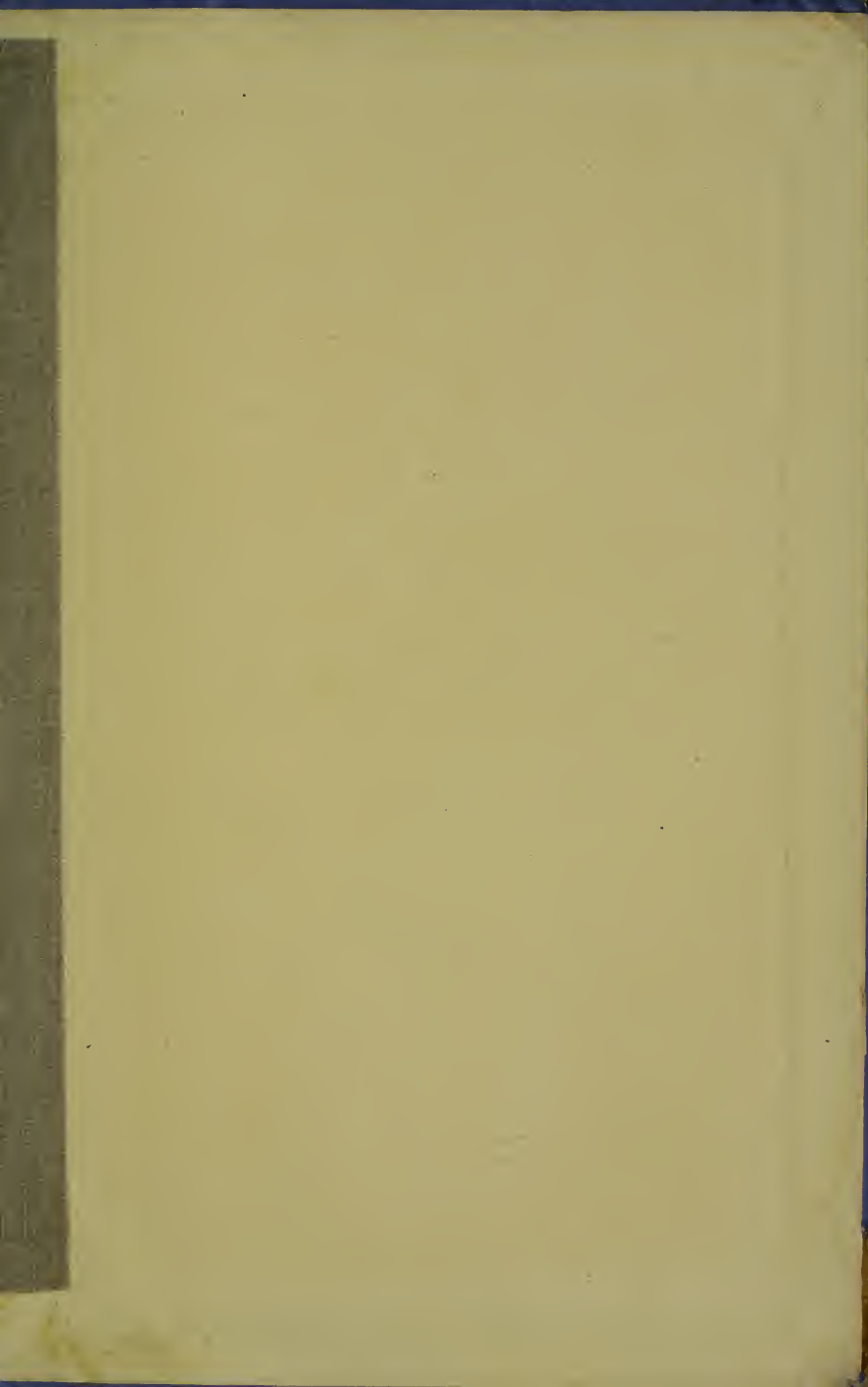
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